

STORIES RETOLD

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

LORD LYTTON

Abridged and Simplified by
E. TYDEMAN

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS



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'I WILL . . . GO WITH YOU,' SAID GLAUCUS, FONDLY STROKING
HIS HORSES

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THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

CHAPTER I

Introduces the reader to some of the characters of the story.

It was a fine summer afternoon in the sunny city of Pompeii. Along one of the broad thoroughfares, bright with the colours of the pleasure-seeking crowds, there strolled a young man of small stature whose rich and fashionable garments marked him as a gentleman and a dandy.

Clodius, for that was his name, had sat late the night before over the gaming-table at the house of a friend, and as he sauntered leisurely along, he mused over his good fortune, for the dice had been in his favour, and he had won large sums from his less fortunate companions.


Lifting his eyes, he found himself face to face with an acquaintance, a man of portly frame and middle age. 'Hallo, Diomed, well met!' said he. 'Do you sup with Glaucus to-night?'

'Alas, no! dear Clodius,' replied Diomed. 'He has not invited me: the mean fellow! They say his suppers are the best in all Pompeii.'

'Yes, pretty good—though there is never enough wine for me. He pretends that wine makes him dull the next morning.'

'There may be another reason for his thrift,' said Diomed raising his brows; 'with all his conceit and extravagance he is not so rich, I fancy, as he pretends to be.'

'A good reason for supping with him while his money lasts. Next year, Diomed, we must find another Glaucus.'



'He is fond of the dice, too, I hear.'

'He is fond of every pleasure, and while he finds pleasure in giving suppers, we are all fond of him.'

'Wittily said, Clodius ! By the by, have you ever seen my wine cellars ?'

'I think not, Diomed.'

'Well, you must sup with me some evening, and I will ask my friend Pansa, the magistrate, to meet you.'

'Oh, do not invite another guest for me,' said Clodius. 'I am easily contented. But the day wanes ; I am going to the baths—and you— ?'

'On business of state, and then to the temple of Isis. Farewell.'

'A conceited, ill-bred fellow,' muttered Clodius, as he sauntered slowly away. 'He thinks his feasts and his wine-cellars will make us forget that he is the son of a freedman ; and so we will, when we do him the honour of winning his money. These rich commoners are a harvest for us spendthrift nobles.'

Thus musing, Clodius strolled into one of the crowded main streets, gay with all the life and show which are to be found to-day in the streets of Naples. Bells jingled merrily as the chariots glided smoothly along, and Clodius, with nods and smiles, greeted the occupants of the most elegant among them, for no idler in Pompeii was better known than he.

'What, Clodius ? and how are you after your good fortune ?' cried, in a pleasant and musical voice, a young man in a magnificent chariot, drawn by a pair of horses of the finest breed.

'My dear Glaucus !' said Clodius, 'I am glad to see that your losses have so little affected you. Why, your face is radiant with happiness ; any one might take you for the winner and me for the loser.'

'And what is there in the loss or gain of a few dull pieces of metal that should make us sad, my Clodius ! Let us be happy while we are young. You sup with me to-night, you know.'

'Who can forget the invitation of Glaucus !'

'But which way are you going now ?'

'I thought of visiting the baths,' replied Clodius, 'but there is still an hour to the usual time.'

'I will dismiss my chariot and go with you,' said Glaucus, and after fondly stroking his horses he joined his friend.

They were in that part of the city which was filled with the gayest shops, the open interiors of which were richly decorated with the most beautiful designs. In every direction the scene was most attractive : sparkling fountains threw their cool waters into the summer air ; crowds of well-dressed passengers loitered about ; gay groups of idlers were collected round the shops ; slaves passed to and fro with their graceful bronze buckets on their heads ; country girls here and there offered for sale lovely flowers and delicious fruit ; while, shaded under purple canopies, were seats which tempted the weary to rest, and the indolent to recline. All this made a scene which might well appeal to Glaucus, for his ancestors were Greeks from sunny and luxurious Athens.

The two friends came suddenly upon a crowd gathered round an open space where three streets met. On the pavement stood a young girl, with a flower-basket on her right arm, and a small three-stringed instrument of music in her left hand to the low and soft tones of which she was singing a wild and half-barbaric air. At every pause in the music she waved her flower-basket round, inviting the passers-by to purchase her flowers ; and many a coin was thrown into the basket, either out of compliment to the music, or compassion for the singer, who was blind.

'It is my poor Nydia,' said Glaucus, stopping ; 'I have not seen her since my return to Pompeii. Hush ! her voice is sweet ; let us listen to the song.'

Glaucus waited until she had finished, and then, pressing through the crowd, and dropping a handful of small coins into the basket, he said, 'Your voice is more charming than ever, sweet Nydia. I must have a bunch of those violets.'

The blind girl started forward as she heard the voice, and then as suddenly paused. 'So you have returned !' said she, in a low voice ; and then repeated half to herself, 'Glaucus has returned.'

'Yes, child, I have been back to Pompeii only a few days. My garden needs your care, as before; and you will visit it, I trust, to-morrow. No garlands shall be woven at my house by any hands but those of Nydia.'

Nydia smiled joyously, but did not answer; and Glaucus, placing in his breast the violets he had purchased, turned carelessly from the crowd.

'So this child is a favourite of yours?' said Clodius.

'Yes—does she not sing prettily? She interests me, the poor slave! Besides, she is from Greece—from Thessaly.'

As he spoke they observed a young lady approaching, her face covered by her veil, and with two slaves attending her on her way to the baths.

'Fair Julia, we salute thee!' said Clodius.

Julia partly raised her veil, so as to display a handsome Roman face, with bright, dark eyes.

'And Glaucus, too, has returned!' said she. 'Has he forgotten his friends of last year?'

'Who can forget the beautiful Julia?' said Glaucus.

'Glaucus is never at a loss for fair words,' replied she.

'Who could be, when speaking to one so fair?'

'We shall see you both at my father's villa soon,' said Julia, turning to Clodius. She dropped her veil, but slowly, so that her last glance rested on Glaucus, a glance of tenderness and reproach.

The friends passed on.

'Julia is certainly handsome,' said Glaucus.

'Last year you would have been more enthusiastic in your admiration of her,' returned Clodius.

'True; but I was dazzled at first sight, and then mistook for a gem what is but an artful imitation.'

'Nay,' said Clodius, 'all women are the same at heart, and happy is he who weds a handsome face with a large fortune.'

Glaucus sighed.

They were now in a less crowded part of the city, and as it was still early for the bath, they wandered down to the sea. Finding a solitary part of the beach, the two men seated themselves on a small rock and gazed thoughtfully over the blue waters of the bay, which were

in their way as animated as the streets of the city. Merchant vessels rode at anchor, the pleasure-boats of the rich moved aimlessly and lazily over the glassy surface, the smaller craft of the fishermen glided rapidly to and fro, while afar off were the tall masts of the fleet under the command of Pliny, Italy's greatest seaman.

This was the scene upon which the two men gazed, but their thoughts were elsewhere. Clodius, shading his eyes from the burning sky, was calculating his gains of the last week, while the Greek was thinking of the land of his forefathers with all its arts, its joys, and its delights.

'Tell me, Cloudius,' said the Greek at last, 'have you ever been in love?'

'Yes, very often.'

'He who has loved often,' answered Glaucus, 'has loved never. True love comes but once in a lifetime.'

'Are you, then, in love?' said Clodius. 'Have you been caught by the emotion which makes us neglect our suppers, forget our pleasures and our duties, and write love-poems? I should never have thought it. You hide your feelings very cleverly.'

'I am not deeply enough in love for that,' returned Glaucus, smiling—'in fact, I am not in love; but I could be if I could but see the object of my love.'

'Shall I guess the object? Is it not Diomed's daughter? She adores you, and does not try to conceal it; moreover, she is both handsome and rich.'

'No, I have no intention of selling myself. Diomed's daughter is handsome, I grant, but she is the grandchild of a freedman, and besides she carries all her beauty in her face, her manners are not graceful, and her mind thinks of nothing but pleasure.'

'You are ungrateful. But tell me, who is the fortunate lady?'

'You shall hear, Clodius. Several months ago I was staying at Naples, a city I love, for it retains the manners and stamp of its Grecian origin. One day I entered a temple to offer up my prayers. The temple was empty and deserted, and as I stood there alone, recollections of Athens crowded upon me, And then I prayed, and as I

prayed, I wept. I was startled in the midst of my devotions, however, by a deep sigh. I turned suddenly round, and just behind me was a woman, her veil raised, also in prayer. Never, Clodius, have I seen a face so beautiful and yet so sad, for tears were streaming from her eyes. Something told me that she, too, was an Athenian, and that in my prayer for Athens her heart had responded to mine. I spoke to her, though with a faltering voice. "O beautiful maiden!" said I, "art thou not also an Athenian?" At the sound of my voice, she blushed, and half drew her veil across her face. "The ashes of my forefathers," she said, "are buried in Athens. I was born in Naples, but my heart is Athenian." "Let us then," said I, "make our offerings together"; and, as the priest now appeared, we stood side by side and repeated together the ceremonial prayer; together we bowed before the goddess—together we laid our garlands on the altar. I felt a strange and almost sacred tenderness at this companionship. Strangers from our far-off land, we stood together and alone in that temple of Minerva—our country's deity. Was it not natural that my heart should yearn to my countrywoman, for so I might surely call her? I felt as if I had known her for years, and our united prayer seemed, as if by a miracle, to create an old friendship. Silently we left the temple, and I was about to ask her where she lived, and if I might be permitted to visit her, when a youth, who from his features appeared to be her brother, and who stood on the temple steps, took her by the hand. She turned round and bade me farewell. The crowd separated us, and I saw her no more.

'On reaching my home, I found letters which made it necessary for me to set out at once for Athens, for my relations were trying to deprive me of a portion of my inheritance. When the suit was happily over, I returned to Naples, and made inquiries throughout the whole city, but not a trace of my lost countrywoman could I discover. Hoping that a gay life would enable me to forget her, I hastened to Pompeii. That is all my history. I do not love; I only remember and regret.'

Glaucus had scarcely finished this recital, when a slow

and stately footstep approached the spot where the two men were seated. They turned sharply at the sound, and each recognized the new-comer.

It was a man who had scarcely reached his fortieth year, tall and spare, but strongly built. His dark features betrayed his Egyptian origin, and his large black eyes were expressive of his thoughtful, half-melancholy nature. His step and bearing were peculiarly sedate and lofty, and something foreign in the fashion and the sober hues of his sweeping garments added to the impressive effect of his quiet countenance and stately form. Each of the young men saluted the new-comer, but in doing so, they were careful to make that sign with their fingers which was believed to ward off danger, for Arbaces, the Egyptian, and priest of Isis, was supposed to possess the fatal gift of the evil eye, the terrible power of bringing disaster upon those who looked at him.

'The scene must indeed be beautiful,' said Arbaces, with a cold though courteous smile, 'which can draw the gay and much-admired Clodius and Glaucus from the attractions of the city.'

'Is not Nature also attractive?' asked the Greek.

'Not to the pleasure-loving,' replied Arbaces.

'A harsh reply, but scarcely a wise one,' returned Glaucus. 'Pleasure is increased by contrasts; it is after gaiety that we learn to enjoy solitude, and after solitude we turn again to pleasure.'

'Well, perhaps you do right to enjoy your pleasures while they last,' said the Egyptian. 'The rose soon withers, and its perfume soon vanishes. And, after all, Glaucus, we are strangers in a land far from the home of our ancestors. What is there left for us but pleasure or regret!—for you, pleasure; for me, perhaps regret.'

The bright eyes of the Greek suddenly filled with tears. 'Ah, speak not, Arbaces,' he cried—'speak not of our ancestors. Let us forget them.'

'Your heart rebukes you while you utter such words,' said the Egyptian, 'and in your gaities this night you will regret the words which you have just spoken. Farewell.'

Thus saying, he gathered up his flowing robe, and strode slowly away.

'I breathe more freely now that he has gone,' said Glaucus. 'He may appear to be unmoved by pleasure, and cold to the things of the world, but scandal tells strange stories about him.'

'Yes, indeed, people whisper that other orgies besides those connected with the ancient wisdom of Egypt take place in his gloomy mansion,' said Clodius, 'and they say he is rich. Can we not get him amongst us, and teach him the charms of the dice—the best of all pleasures?'

For answer Glaucus only smiled, and as the afternoon was now wearing away, the two friends arose, and made their leisurely way back to the city.

CHAPTER 2

Gives a description of the house of Glaucus, and of the revels which took place there.

Glaucus was one of Fortune's favourites. He was the happy possessor of beauty, health, wealth, and genius, he belonged to a noble family, and he had a brave heart and a cultured mind. He had early inherited a large fortune, which had enabled him to satisfy a long-felt desire to visit Rome, where he had given himself up to the delights and joys of the luxurious city.

But he was without ambition. He was what a man of youth, fortune, and talents so readily becomes when he has no guide and no goal. His house at Rome was the resort of idlers, but it was also the admiration of every lover of art, for it had been decorated by the most renowned sculptors and painters of the day. And as for his retreat at Pompeii, that fairy mansion was furnished and adorned in the most sumptuous and artistic fashion. Always fond of poetry and the drama, he had decorated his walls with scenes from Greek plays and poems, so that when, after eighteen centuries, the house was again

revealed to the light of day, it was called by those who then saw it 'The House of the Dramatic Poet.'

To this delightful house Glaucus returned after the events related in the previous chapter, and that evening his guests assembled in the richly-decorated banquetting-chamber which opened on to the garden, gay with the choicest flowers. The furniture of the apartment was of the costliest: the table was highly polished and inlaid with silver, while the bronze couches on which Glaucus and his friends reclined were furnished with thick, soft, embroidered cushions.

Slaves soon appeared bearing trays covered with the first dainties of the feast. Delicious figs, fresh herbs strewn with snow, fish and eggs with cups of diluted wine mixed with honey were placed on the table. Young slaves then bore round to each of the five guests (for there were no more) a silver basin of perfumed water, and napkins edged with a purple fringe.

Pansa, the magistrate, however, drew out his own napkin, which was not indeed of so fine a linen, but on which the fringe was twice as broad, and wiped his hands with all the show of a man inviting admiration.

'That is a lovely napkin of yours,' said Clodius. 'Why, the fringe is as broad as a girdle!'

'A mere trifle,' said Pansa; 'they tell me this stripe is the latest fashion at Rome.'

'Let thy blessing rest upon us,' said Glaucus, bowing before the image of the god of the revels which was placed in the centre of the table. The guests followed the prayer, sprinkling wine on the table according to the usual custom, and the feast commenced.

'When is our next wild-beast fight to be?' said Clodius to Pansa.

'Early next month; we have a most lovely young lion for the occasion.'

'But whom shall we get for him to eat?' asked Clodius. 'There is a great scarcity of criminals. You must find some innocent person instead, Pansa.'

'Indeed, I have thought much about it of late,' said the magistrate. 'It was a most unjust law which forbade

us to send our own slaves to the lions. Why can we not do what we like with our own? This pretended mercy to the slaves is such a disappointment to the poor people. They love to see a good fight between a man and a lion.'

'What can be worse than this interference with the manly sports of the people?' said Clodius.

'I love these spectacles well enough,' broke in Glaucus, 'when beast fights beast; but when a man, with flesh and blood like ourselves, is put into the arena and torn limb from limb, it is too horrible. I sicken—I gasp for breath—I long to rush and defend him. I am glad there seems to be so little change of that sort of exhibition at our next show.'

Pansa shrugged his shoulders, and Sallust, who was sitting next him, and who was thought to be the most good-natured man in Pompeii, looked up in surprise. Indeed, all the guests were amazed to find that their host disapproved of what was a common form of amusement.

'Well, you Italians are used to these things,' went on Glaucus; 'we Greeks are more merciful. We, too, are fond of games, but we like the more noble contest of man with man, where one is proud to strive against a noble foe, and is sorry to see him overcome. But you do not understand me.'

This remark of Glaucus caused a moment's silence, and then Sallust changed the conversation. 'This kid is excellently cooked,' he said. 'Your cook is of course from Sicily?'

'Yes, from Syracuse.'

'I will play you for him,' said Clodius; 'let us have a game between the courses.'

'Better that sort of game than a wild-beast fight,' said Glaucus; 'but I cannot risk my Sicilian cook—you have nothing so precious to stake in return.'

'By the way,' inquired Sallust, 'have you heard the new song in honour of the Egyptian Isis? It is really magnificent.'

'Isis seems to be a favourite deity at Pompeii,' said Glaucus.

'Yes!' said Pansa, 'she is very popular just now; her

statue has been uttering the most marvellous prophecies lately. I am not superstitious, but I must confess that she has more than once helped me with her advice. Her priests are so pious too ; they walk barefoot, eat no meat, and pass the greater part of the night in silent devotion !'

'They say that Arbaces has imparted some most solemn mysteries to the priests of Isis,' observed Sallust. 'He traces his descent from the ancient kings of Egypt, and declares that he possesses secrets of the remotest antiquity.'

'He certainly possesses the gift of the evil eye,' said Clodius, 'for if ever I see him I am sure to lose a favourite horse or to meet the worst of luck at dice.'

'If Arbaces were not so rich,' said Pansa, with an air of importance, 'I should feel bound to exercise my authority a little, and inquire into the truth of the report which says he is a magician. Magicians should be banished, but he is a rich man, and it is the duty of a magistrate to protect the rich.' And Pansa looked round the table for approval.

'What do you think of this new sect ? Christians they call them,' asked Glaucus.

'Oh, mere nobodies,' said Clodius ; 'they have not a single gentleman amongst them ; then converts are poor, ignorant people.'

'But they ought to be crucified for their irreverence,' said Pansa, passionately ; 'they deny all our gods. Let me catch them—that's all.'

The second course was finished, and the feasters fell back on their couches listening to the soft strains of the music which had been provided by their host.

In due time the third course, consisting of a variety of fruits, nuts, sweetmeats, and confectionery, was brought in and placed on the table ; and the attendants also set there the wine in large glass jugs. It had hitherto been handed round to the guests.

'This is most excellent wine, Pansa,' said Sallust.

'Yes, and what a beautiful cup !' cried Clodius, taking up one of the crystal jugs, the handles of which were fashioned like serpents and set with gems.

'This ring,' said Glaucus, taking a costly jewel from his

finger, 'gives it a richer show, and renders it more worthy of your acceptance, my Clodius, and may the gods favour you with health and fortune.'

'You are too generous, Glaucus,' said Clodius, handing the cup to his slave, 'but your love gives it a double value.'

'Health to our host!' cried Pansa, and he thrice emptied his cup, the other guests following his example.

The musicians again struck their instruments to a wild air, while the youngest voice in the band sang in Greek words a song which Glaucus himself had composed.

At its conclusion the guests applauded loudly. When the poet is your host, the verses are sure to please.

'The air is thoroughly Ionic,' said Clodius, 'and that word puts me in mind of a toast. Friends, let us drink to the beautiful Ione.'

'Ione!—the name is Greek,' said Glaucus, softly. 'I drink the toast with all my heart. But who is Ione?'

'It is evident you have only just come to Pompeii, or you would not be so ignorant,' said Lepidus. 'Not to know Ione is not to know the chief charm of our city.'

'She is the most rare beauty,' said Pansa, 'and what a lovely voice!'

'Do tell me, I beseech you,' said Glaucus.

'When, then—' began Lepidus.

'Let me speak,' cried Clodius. 'Ione is a stranger who has but lately come to Pompeii. She sings like a night-ingale, and her songs are of her own composing; and as for the flute, the cithara, and the lyre, I do not know in which she most excels. She is wonderfully beautiful, and her house is perfect; such taste—such gems! She is rich, too, and as generous as she is rich.'

'Then she has many admirers,' said Glaucus.

'Ah, there is the riddle. All Pompeii adores her, yet she has no lover; she will not marry.'

'A miracle!' cried Glaucus. 'Can we not see her?'

'I will take you there now, if you are so inclined,' replied Clodius; and Glaucus, although he civilly pressed his guests to continue the banquet, could not disguise his desire to look upon one whose beauty had been so highly praised. They therefore bowed their heads once more

before the image in the centre of the table, passed through the house, and found themselves beneath the light of the newly risen moon in the lively and still crowded streets of Pompeii.

They passed the jewellers' quarter, sparkling with lights, which were reflected by the brilliant gems displayed in the shops, and arrived at last at the mansion of Ione. The doorway blazed with lights, the rooms were hung with embroidered purple curtains, and the walls glowed with the richest colours of the artist. Ione was in the garden, where she was already surrounded by admiring and applauding guests.

'Did you say she was Athenian?' whispered Glaucus to Clodius as they entered the garden.

'No, she is from Naples.'

'Naples!' repeated Glaucus, wonderingly; and at that moment the group divided, and he found himself face to face with the very maiden whose memory had lingered with him since the day when he had visited the temple in Naples several months before.

CHAPTER 3

Gives an account of the worship of Isis, and shows the true character of Arbaces.

WE left Arbaces on the sea-shore after he had parted from Glaucus and his companion. As he approached the more crowded part of the bay, he paused and gazed upon the scene with folded arms, and with a bitter smile on his dark features.

'Fools that you are!' he muttered to himself. 'Greek or Roman, it is from the ancient wisdom of Egypt that you have obtained all your knowledge. Your poetry, your laws, your mastery of war, you have stolen all from us, as a slave steals fragments from a feast. Plod on, fools of ambition! I despise you. My power you cannot thwart; by its wisdom my soul controls you, my influence

extends wherever men can be deceived, and that is everywhere.'

Thus saying, the Egyptian moved slowly on, his form towering above the crowded throng, until he reached the small but graceful temple of Isis.

This temple was in great favour among the Pompeians at this time, and the oracles of its goddess were indeed remarkable, not only for the mysterious language in which they were uttered, but also for the readiness with which her prophecies were believed.

When Arbaces entered the open court he found a large crowd, chiefly composed of the commercial class, standing breathless before the many altars. At the far end of the court was the sanctuary, approached by seven marble steps, its walls occupied by statues and decorated with pomegranates, the sacred fruit of the goddess. In the centre was an oblong platform on which stood the statue of Isis and its companion image of Orus.

We must not imagine that the pure worship of Isis was conducted here. The ancient mysteries of Egypt were debased by the religious customs of many countries and ages, and in his heart, Arbaces, the descendant of ancient Egyptian kings, despised this miserable mockery of the religion of his forefathers.

'And what occasion,' he whispered to a merchant standing by, 'brings you now to the temple of Isis? It seems that a sacrifice is to be offered, and that you are waiting for some oracle. To what question is it to give a reply?'

'We are merchants,' replied Diomed, for it was he, 'who seek to know the fate of our vessels which sail for Alexandria to-morrow. I am not one of those who requested the priest to sacrifice, but I am interested in the success of the fleet.'

While the priest looked for the omens in the entrails of the sacrifice, the face of Arbaces was clouded with anxiety, but it brightened as the signs were declared favourable, and the fire began to consume the victim. Then a dead silence fell over the crowd, and the priests gathered round the image of Isis. A low murmuring noise was heard within the body of the statue: thrice the head

moved and the lips parted, and then a hollow voice uttered these strange words :

There are waves like chargers that meet and glow,
There are graves ready wrought in the rocks below,
On the brow of the future dread dangers lower,
But safe are your ships in that fearful hour.

The voice ceased—the merchants looked at each other and breathed more freely. 'What can be plainer?' said Diomed; 'there is to be a storm at sea, but our vessels are to be saved. O glorious Isis!'

After a short concluding prayer the ceremony was over, and the congregation dismissed. The Egyptian, however, lingered behind, and when the temple court was almost empty a priest approached and saluted him.

The face of this priest was most unattractive. His low, shaven skull was almost like that of a pre-historic man, his forehead was wrinkled, his eyes were dark and small, his nose short and coarse. But his frame was strong and muscular, capable of any feat of exertion or endurance that might be demanded of him.

'Calenus,' said the Egyptian, 'you have greatly improved the voice of the statue, by attending to my instructions, and your verses are excellent. Always prophesy good fortune, unless there is no possible chance of its fulfilment. But I wish to speak to you of other matters; let us retire to one of your apartments.'

The priest led the way to a small chamber, where they seated themselves before a table spread with dishes containing fruit and eggs, and cold meat, with jugs of wine, of which the two companions partook as they talked.

'You know,' said Arbaces, in a voice scarcely above a whisper 'that I have always made it a practice to attach myself to the young, for I can mould their unformed minds according to my will. You know, also, that in Naples some time ago I came upon the Athenians, the fair Ione and her brother Apæcides. The death of their parents, who knew and esteemed me, made me their guardian, and I have tried to carry out my trust. To Apæcides I taught the solemn faith of Isis, and he submitted readily to my

teaching, for he is deeply religious by nature. He is now one of your priests.'

'He is,' replied Calenus, 'but in teaching him the faith, you have robbed him of wisdom. Now that he knows our secrets, he is horror-struck, he revolts against our speaking statue and hidden stairway; he wastes away; he mutters to himself; he refuses to take part in our ceremonies; he is even suspected of frequenting the company of the new sect of Christians, who deny our gods, and call our oracles an invention of the evil one.'

'That is what I feared,' said Arbaces, thoughtfully, 'from what he said when I last saw him. He has avoided me lately; I must find him, and continue my lessons; he must learn that there are two stages in religion—the first, Faith, for the vulgar, and the second, Delusion, for the wise.'

'I never passed through the first,' said Calenus, 'nor you either, I think, Arbaces?'

'You are mistaken,' replied the Egyptian. 'I have faith in my own knowledge, and that was revealed to me—but no matter. Let us return to our subject. If I thus fulfilled my object with Apæcides by making him a priest of Isis, what was my plan for Ione? You know already that I intend to make her my bride.'

'I hear she is very beautiful,' said Calenus.

'Yes, she has a loveliness that has never been excelled,' said Arbaces. 'But that is not all; she has a soul worthy to match with mine. She has a brilliant intellect, poetry flows from her lips, and her mind seizes in a moment the most profound truths. She is as brave as she is gentle, and she can stand alone in the world. This is the nature I have sought all my life in woman, and I have never found it until now. Ione must be mine.'

'She is not yours yet, then?' said the priest.

'No, she loves me, but only as a friend. But let me go on with her history. The brother and sister were young and rich: Ione proud and ambitious—proud of her genius, her poetry, her conversation. When her brother entered your temple, Ione removed also to Pompeii in order to be near him. Here her talents have become known, crowds

flock to her feasts, her voice enchants them. I encouraged her in this boldness, for I wished her to be surrounded by lovers, empty, vain, and frivolous, lovers that her nature must despise, in order that she might feel the want of love. When this happens, I will work my charms, and possess myself of her heart. It is not the young, nor the beautiful, nor the gay that will attract Ione: her mind must be won, and my life has been spent in bringing the minds of others into subjection to my own.'

'Have you no fear of rivals?' asked Calenus.

'None! Her Greek soul despises the barbarian Roman, and she would despise herself if she entertained a single thought of love for one of that race.'

'But you are an Egyptian, not a Greek!'

'Egypt,' replied Arbaces, 'is the mother of Athens. This I have already taught her, and she venerates the ancient kings from whom I trace my descent. Yet I must own that disturbing thoughts have crossed my mind of late. She is more silent than she used to be, she loves mournful music, she sighs without apparent reason. This may be due to the beginning of love, or to the want of it. In either case, it is time for me to begin my operation, and therefore I come to you.'

'But how can I help you?'

'I am about to invite her to a feast at my house. I wish to dazzle and bewilder her, and the arts of Egypt must be employed. By means of the mysteries of religion I will reveal to her the secrets of love. But first we must ensnare the brother—an easier task. Listen to me, then, while I give my instructions.'

CHAPTER 4

Continues the story of the flower-girl, and relates an interview between Glaucus and Ione.

ON the morning after the banquet and the visit to the house of Ione, Glaucus paced his chamber absorbed in

thought. 'I have seen her once more,' he said—'nay, I have spoken to her again. I have listened to the music of her song, and she sang of glory and of Greece. I have found again the idol of my dreams—'

His musings were interrupted by a shadow which broke suddenly across the stream of sunlight which poured into the open door. He looked up, and there stood Nydia. She looked little more than a child, but her features were womanly beyond her years. A look of sadness had banished the smiles, but not the sweetness from her lips, and although sightless, her eyes were bright and clear, and without visible defect. On one arm she carried a basket of flowers, and in the other hand she held a bronze water-vase. 'They tell me Glaucus is here,' she said; 'may I come in?'

'Ah, Nydia,' said the Greek, 'is that you? I knew you would not forget my invitation.'

'How can I?' answered Nydia, with a blush; 'you have always been kind to the poor blind flower-girl.'

'Who could be otherwise?' said Glaucus, tenderly, in the voice of a compassionate brother.

Nydia did not reply to his remark, but went on, with a sigh. 'You have but lately come back to Pompeii?'

'I returned six days ago.'

'And are you well? Ah, I need not ask—for no one who sees the earth, which they tell me is so beautiful, can be ill.'

'I am well, thank you. And you, Nydia—how you have grown!'

'I have been ill,' she said, 'but I am better now. I have brought you some flowers—they are poor, but they are fresh gathered.'

'They are very beautiful,' said Glaucus, kindly, 'and I repeat my vow that I will have no other garlands while you can bring me such as these'

'And how do you find the flowers in your garden?—are they thriving?'

'Wonderfully so—the gods themselves must have tended them in my absence.'

'Ah, now you give me pleasure, for I came as often as I could find leisure to water them.'



'AH, NYDIA,' SAID THE GREFK, 'IS THAT YOU?'

'How can I thank you, Nydia? I little thought any one was watching over my favourites at Pompeii.'

This remark seemed to distress Nydia, and she turned away sadly. 'The sun is hot for the poor flowers,' she said, 'and *they* will miss me. I have been too poorly to visit them for nine days.' She made a slight bow, and passing into the garden, was soon busy watering the flowers.

'Poor Nydia,' thought Glaucus as he watched her, 'yours is a hard lot. You cannot see the earth—nor the sun—nor the sea—nor the stars;—above all, you cannot behold Ione.'

At this last thought his mind again flew back to the memories of the previous evening, only to be again disturbed, this time by the entrance of Clodius. So much had the love of Glaucus for Ione increased in a single evening, that whereas he had told Clodius the secret of his first interview with her, he now felt disinclined even to mention her name to him. He felt that his companions of the feast had been altogether unworthy of her.

So when Clodius began to praise the beauty of Ione, Glaucus felt only anger and disgust that such lips should dare to speak of her; he therefore answered coldly, and Clodius inferred that his love had diminished rather than increased. This Clodius did not regret, for he was anxious that Glaucus should marry a still richer heiress—Julia, the daughter of the wealthy Diomed, whose gold he might thus be able to win. As the conversation did not seem to flow with its usual ease, Clodius soon left, and no sooner had he gone, than Glaucus started for the house of Ione. As he passed into the street he again saw Nydia, who had finished her task. She knew his step in an instant.

'You are going out early this morning,' she said.

'Yes, the lovely skies and the sunshine are very inviting,' replied Glaucus.

'I wish I could see them,' she said, in a voice so low that he did not hear the complaint. She lingered listening to his receding footsteps for a few moments, and then, guiding her steps with a long staff, she took her way homeward. She turned from the fashionable streets, and entered a humbler quarter of the town. The hour was still early,

and the streets were quiet : her ear was not shocked by the rude jests which were too often to be heard in this locality.

She knocked at the back-door of a mean lodging-house, kept by one Burbo, a retired gladiator. The door opened, and a rude voice bade her give an account of her earnings. Before she could reply, another voice, less vulgar, said :

‘ Never mind her money, Burbo. Her voice will soon be wanted again at the revels of Arbaces, and he pays, as you know, a good fee for his singers.’

‘ Oh, I hope not—I trust not,’ cried Nydia, trembling ; ‘ I will beg from sunrise to sunset, but do not send me there.’

‘ Why not ? ’ asked the same voice.

‘ Because—because I am young, and of good birth, and the people I meet there are not fit companions for one who—who—’

‘ Is a slave in the house of Burbo,’ returned the voice, with a coarse laugh.

The girl put down her flowers, and leaning her face on her hands, wept silently.

Meanwhile Glaucus arrived at the house of Ione. He found her surrounded by her attendants, and her harp stood untouched at her side, for Ione was unusually idle, perhaps unusually thoughtful, that morning. She seemed to be more beautiful in the clear light of day, and in her simple robe, than under the blazing lamps, and adorned with the costly jewels of the previous night. They talked of Greece, a subject about which Ione loved to listen rather than to converse, and one on which Glaucus could have been eloquent for ever. He described the stern mountains and the smiling valleys, the olive groves on the banks of winding streams, and the temples, now crumbling into decay ; he spoke of the poetry and the art of Athens when at the height of her glory. And Ione listened to him absorbed and silent. Was it wrong for her to love her countryman ? In him she loved Athens—in his voice she heard the accents of her gods and her forefathers.

From that time they saw each other daily. In the cool of the evening they sailed on the peaceful waters of the

bay ; at night they met again in Ione's hall. Their love was sudden, but it was strong. And it was natural that they should so love. Young, beautiful, and gifted, of the same birth, and the same soul, they imagined that heaven smiled upon their love.

One evening, the fifth after their first meeting at Pompeii, Glaucus and Ione, with a small party of chosen friends, were enjoying a sail round the bay. As the rest of the party conversed gaily, Glaucus sat silent at the feet of Ione. Presently she broke the silence.

'My poor brother,' said she, sighing, 'how he would once have enjoyed an hour like this !'

'Your brother ?' said Glaucus. 'I have not seen him. I have often intended to ask if that was not your brother who took you from me on the temple steps at Naples.'

'It was.'

'And is he here ?'

'He is.'

'At Pompeii, and never with you ? Impossible !'

'He has other duties,' answered Ione, sadly ; 'he is a priest of Isis.'

'He is very young, and that priesthood, in its rules, at least, is very severe,' said the warm-hearted Greek. 'What could have led him to take such a step ?'

'He was always very religious,' she replied, 'and our friend and guardian, an Egyptian, persuaded him to consecrate his life to the service of the goddess.'

'I hope he does not repent his choice ?'

Ione sighed deeply, and lowered her veil over her eyes to hide her tears.

'I wish,' she said after a pause, 'that he had not been so hasty. Perhaps, like all who expect too much, he is very easily disappointed.'

Then he is not happy in his new condition. And this Egyptian, is he a priest himself ? Is he interested in securing recruits for the priesthood ?'

'No, he is simply interested in our welfare. He thought he was doing his best for my brother's happiness. We are orphans.'

'Like myself,' said Glaucus, with a deep meaning in his tone.

Ione cast down her eyes as she resumed—'Arbaces wished to supply the place of our father. You must know him.'

'Arbaces ! Of course I know him ; at least, we speak when we meet. But for your praise, I would not seek to know more of him. I can make friends with most men, but that dark Egyptian, with his gloomy brow and cold smile, seems to me to sadden the very sun.'

'Yet he is kind, and wise, and gentle,' said Ione ; 'his calm and coldness are the result of past sufferings ; as yonder mountain'—and she pointed to Vesuvius—'which we see dark and quiet, once nursed fires now for ever quenched.'

They both gazed at the mountain as she spoke. The rest of the sky looked lovely in its soft and rosy light, but over that summit there hung a black and ominous cloud, the only frown on an otherwise beautiful scene. A sudden fear came over each of them as they gazed, and in that sympathy which love had already taught them, and which bade them turn to each other for refuge at the least sign of fear, their eyes met. What need had they of words to say that they loved ?

CHAPTER 5

Shows how Arbaces deceived Apæcides and Ione.

WE left Arbaces at the temple of Isis revealing to Calenus the plans he had devised for regaining his waning influence over Apæcides. The proud and masterful spirit of the Egyptian could not bear the thought that one who had once been in his power should escape from his grasp, and he resolved to lose no time in subduing the rebellious young priest to his will.

This resolution was uppermost in his mind as he passed through a thick grove in the city on his way to the house

of lone. His thoughts were suddenly, but only for a moment, interrupted, for there, leaning against a tree, with his eyes fixed on the ground, was Apæcides.

'My son,' said the Egyptian, laying his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder, 'what has happened that you always avoid me?'

The priest started, and his first impulse seemed to be that of flight, but he remained silent and sullen, his eyes downcast, his lips quivering, and his breast heaving with emotion.

'Speak to me, my friend,' continued the Egyptian. 'Speak. Something weighs upon your mind. What have you to reveal?'

'To you—nothing.'

'And why can you not confide in me?'

'Because you have been my enemy.'

'Let us have a little talk together,' said Arbaces, in his low voice; and drawing the arm of the priest through his own, he led him to a seat near by, where they sat down, two forms as gloomy as the shade and solitude by which they were surrounded.

Apæcides seemed to have grown old beyond his years, his youthful frame was bowed, his features were worn and pale, his eyes were sunken, and the blue veins of his delicate hands were swollen with weakness.

'You say I have been your enemy,' said Arbaces, after a pause. 'I know the cause of that unjust accusation. I have placed you among the priests of Isis, you are shocked at their trickery, and you think that I, too, have deceived you—'

'You knew their deceits,' broke in Apæcides; 'why did you hide them from me? When you induced me to give my life to the service of Isis, you spoke of holy men seeking knowledge,—you have given me as companions an ignorant herd, who have no knowledge but that of fraud; you spoke of men giving up the world in the pursuit of virtue,—you have placed me with those who debase themselves with vice. Oh! it was wickedly done! Young and rich as I was, with all the pleasures of life before me, I resigned them all without a pang, believing that I should

gain the knowledge of divine wisdom and the companionship of the gods, but now—now—'

Passionate sobs checked the priest's voice ; he covered his face with his hands, and hot tears forced themselves between his wasted fingers, and ran down his vest.

'What I promised, that will I give you, my friend, my pupil ; these have been but trials to test you. Think no more of these deceivers, associate no more with the menials of the goddess. From henceforth I will be your priest and your guide, and you who now curse my friendship shall live to bless me.'

The young man raised his head, and gazed with a wondering stare at the Egyptian.

'Listen to me,' continued Arbaces, in an earnest and solemn voice, first glancing round to see that they were still alone. 'From Egypt came all the knowledge of the world ; from Egypt came the wisdom of Athens and Rome. Your modern nations owe their greatness to Egypt, and Egypt owes her greatness to her priests. Themselves holy, those ancient ministers of God founded their religion on the highest principles, but the unlearned and ignorant could not understand such advanced teaching, and for them it was put into the form of a fable. Isis is a fable—nay, do not start !—a symbol which stands for something real. Isis is nothing, but Nature, whom she represents, is the mother of all things—and Nature is a mystery, except to the gifted few. The priests, then, were the benefactors of mankind ; true, they were cheats and imposters, if you will. But how could they have served mankind, if they had not deceived them ? The ignorant must be deceived if they are to be benefited ; they would not believe a religion which they could not understand—but they would reverence an oracle. I see by your attention that the light begins to dawn on you.'

Apæcides remained silent, but the thoughtful look in his eyes showed that the words of the Egyptian were having the desired effect.

Arbaces went on : 'I saw in you, Apæcides, a pupil worthy of my lessons ; your talents, your enthusiasm, your purity of faith, all fitted you for a calling which demands



ARBACES MOVED SILENTLY FORWARD

noble qualities ; so I encouraged you in the step you have taken. But you blame me for not revealing to you the true character of your companions. Had I done so, I should have defeated my own object ; your spirit would have at once rebelled, and Isis would have lost her priest.'

Apæcides groaned aloud, but the Egyptian continued without heeding the interruption.

'I placed you, therefore, without preparation, in the temple. I left you to discover for yourself all its trickeries and deceits, and I am not surprised that they offend you. But you have taken the vows, and you cannot draw back. Advance—in future I will be your guide.'

'And what will you teach me, O fearful man ? New frauds—new—'

'No, you are now in the depths of disbelief ; I will lead you to the heights of faith. You have discovered the false, you shall now learn the true. Come to me to-night. And now, give me your hand.'

Impressed by the words of the Egyptian, Apæcides gave him his hand, and master and pupil parted, the latter to think over what he had just heard, and the former to visit the house of Ione.

Arbaces had not of late seen Ione, and he was quite unaware of the friendship which had suddenly sprung up between her and Glaucus, so when, on entering the porch, the last strains of a song in the clear voice of Glaucus reached his ears, a sharp thrill of jealousy shot through his breast. Passing through the house, he paused at the door into the garden, his attention riveted on the sight which met his eyes.

In a shady corner sat Ione, and near by sat Glaucus, with the lyre on which he had been playing at his feet. At a little distance were the handmaids who were constantly in attendance on their mistress. Unobserved he paused and gazed upon the pair, and as he stood there, fragments of their conversation reached his ear. Glaucus was speaking of love—the meagreness of love as described by the poets when compared with the pure true love of the heart. Filled with an anger of which he did not betray the slightest sign, Arbaces moved silently forward until he

stood motionless behind the chair of Ione. A slight movement of his foot on the marble pavement caused them both to look up with a start.

'You are a sudden guest,' said Glaucus, rising, and greeting the Egyptian with a forced smile.

'So ought all to be who know they are welcome,' returned Arbaces, seating himself, and motioning to Glaucus to do the same.

'I am glad,' said Ione, 'to see you two at last together, for you are suited to each other, and ought to be friends.'

'You must give me back some fifteen years of life,' replied the Egyptian, 'before you can place me on an equality with Glaucus. I have no pleasure in banquets, and garlands, and gambling; these pleasures suit his age, his nature, and his tastes, but they are not for me.'

So saying the artful Egyptian looked down, and sighed; but from the corner of his eye he stole a glance towards Ione to see how she received these reproaches upon the character of her visitor. Her countenance did not satisfy him, and Glaucus hastened to reply.

'You are right, wise Arbaces,' he said; 'we may esteem each other, but we cannot be friends. Perhaps when I have reached your age I may think it wise to take my pleasures as you take yours, and then perhaps I, too, shall be severe upon the pastimes of youth.'

'I do not understand you,' said he, coldly, and turning from Glaucus with this sneer of contempt, he addressed himself to Ione. 'I have not,' he said, 'been fortunate enough to find you at home the last two or three times that I have called.'

'The smoothness of the sea has tempted me much of late,' replied Ione, a little confused.

Her confusion did not escape Arbaces, but without seeming to heed it, he replied with a smile: 'You know what the old poet says: "Women should remain indoors."'

'The poet was a churl,' said Glaucus, and hated women.'

'He spoke according to the customs of his country,' returned Arbaces, 'and that country is your boasted Greece.'

'But different times have different customs. Had our forefathers known Ione they would have made a different law.'

'Did you learn to make these pretty speeches at Rome?' asked the Egyptian with a sneer.

'One certainly could not learn them in Egypt,' retorted Glaucus.

Ione saw that sharp words such as these were not likely to promote the friendship she desired between Glaucus and her guardian, so she hastened to interrupt the conversation. 'Arbaces must not be too hard upon his poor pupil,' she said. 'I am an orphan, and without a mother's care, and I may be to blame for the independence of life which I have chosen; yet it is not greater liberty than Roman women are accustomed to, and which Grecian women ought to have. Are only *men* to be free? Men are mistaken in imagining that the nature of women is inferior to their own, and in making rules which check the advancement of their wives and daughters.' Ione stopped, for she was afraid lest her enthusiasm had carried her too far, and she was, therefore delighted when Glaucus replied:

'May you always think thus, Ione; may your pure heart ever be your guide!'

Arbaces was silent, for he wished neither to agree with Glaucus, nor to differ from Ione, and after a little further conversation Glaucus rose and took his leave.

When he had gone, Arbaces drew his seat nearer to Ione's, and began to speak in those soft tones he so often assumed to hide his true character.

'Do not think, Ione, that I wish to curtail your liberty, but at least use your liberty wisely. By all means continue to draw crowds of the brilliant and the wise, continue to charm them with your conversation, but do not forget that there are tongues which are only too ready to talk scandal, and to ruin a fair reputation.'

'What do you mean, Arbaces?' said Ione, in a trembling voice; 'I know you are my friend, and that you desire my welfare. What is it you want to say?'

'Your friend—let me then speak as your friend. This Glaucus, how did you come to know him? Have you seen

him often ? ' And Arbaces fixed his gaze steadfastly upon Ione.

With confusion and hesitation she answered : ' He was brought to my house as a countryman of my father's, and I may say, of mine. I have known him only a week or two ; but why these questions ? '

' Forgive me,' said Arbaces, ' I thought you might have known him longer, for it was only yesterday that Glaucus boasted openly of your love for him. He said it amused him. Nay, I will do him justice, he certainly praised your beauty, but who could deny that ? But he laughed scornfully when Clodius, or another of his gay friends, asked him if he loved you enough to marry you.'

' Impossible ! How came you to hear this base slander ? '

' Would you have me repeat all the comments that are being made in the town ? I disbelieved the story myself at first, but I have been painfully convinced of its truth by several who heard him say what I have now told you.'

Ione sank back, and her face was as pale as the marble pillar against which she leaned for support.

' I was annoyed,' went on Arbaces, ' to hear your name thus lightly tossed from lip to lip, and I hastened this morning to warn you. When I found Glaucus here, I fear I lost control of my temper, and was rude in your presence. Can you forgive your friend, Ione ? '

Ione gave him her hand, but made no reply.

' Think no more about it,' said Arbaces, ' but let it be a warning to you to be prudent. Rumour cannot hurt you for a moment, and as for the cruel words of Glaucus, neither can they hurt you ; such things only wound when they come from one we love.'

The Egyptian had artfully appealed to Ione's ruling passion—to her pride, and he thought he had arrested what, from the shortness of the time she had known Glaucus, was only a passing fancy. He therefore hastened to change the subject, and led her to talk of her brother. Their conversation did not last long, and he left her resolved to keep a closer watch over her in future, and to visit her every day.

No sooner had he gone than her pride deserted her, and Ione burst into passionate tears.

CHAPTER 6

Explains the creed of Arbaces and his mode of instruction.

THE evening darkened over the restless city as Apæcides took his way to the house of the Egyptian. He avoided the gay and fashionable streets, and as he strode along with his eyes downcast, and his arms folded under his robe, there was something strange in the contrast between his thoughtful face and wasted form, and the careless air of those who occasionally crossed his path.

At length, however, a man as quiet and grave as Apæcides himself, who had twice passed him, touched him on the shoulder.

'Apæcides !' said he, and he made a rapid sign with his hands ; it was the sign of the cross.

'Well, Christian,' replied the priest—and his face grew, if possible, paler—'what do you want ?'

'Nay,' returned the stranger, 'I must not interrupt your meditations ; but the last time we met, I seemed to be more welcome.'

'You are not unwelcome, Olinthus,' said Apæcides, 'but I am sad and weary ; and am unable this evening to discuss with you the things of your religion.'

'O slow of heart !' said Olinthus, with bitter earnestness, 'you are sad and weary, and yet you turn away from the very spring of truth which will refresh you.'

'What am I to do ?' cried the young priest passionately ; 'am I to believe with this man that the gods whom my fathers have worshipped are no gods ? Am I to think with Arbaces—what ?'

He paused, and then strode rapidly away, as though to escape from his own thoughts. But the Christian did not suffer Apæcides so easily to escape him. He overtook him, and thus addressed him :

'I do not wonder, Apæcides, that I distress you, that you are lost in doubt ; but watch and pray, and God Himself will deliver your soul. Our religion is stern in its demands, but it is rich and generous in its gifts. It troubles you for an hour, it repays you by immortality.'

'Such promises,' said Apæcides, sullenly, 'are the tricks by which man is always deceived. How glorious were the promises which tempted me to throw in my lot with Isis !'

'But ask yourself,' answered Olinthus, 'can that religion be true which sets morality at nought ? You are told to worship your gods. What are those gods, even according to your own teaching ? Are they not represented to you as having performed deeds as black as those of any criminal ? What is this but a mockery of the highest and holiest part of your nature ? Turn now to *the* God, the one true God, whom we preach. I see that you are touched—you are half-convinced. God is working in your heart. Come, do not resist Him, come at once. A few of us are assembled to expound the word of God. Let me take you to them. You are sad and weary. Listen, then, to the words of God : "Come to Me," He says, "all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."'

'I cannot now,' said Apæcides ; 'another time.'

'Now—now !' exclaimed Olinthus, earnestly, and clasping his arm.

But Apæcides, not yet prepared to renounce the faith for which he had sacrificed so much, and still trusting the promises of the Egyptian, released himself forcibly from the grasp, and gathering up his robe, fled away with a speed that defied pursuit.

Breathless and exhausted, he arrived at last in that remote and solitary part of the city where the lone house of the Egyptian stood. As he paused to recover himself, the moon emerged from behind a silver cloud, and shone full upon the walls of that mysterious building.

No other house was near ; the dark vines clustered far and wide in front of the building, and behind it rose a copse of lofty forest trees, standing out in the melancholy moonlight ; beyond could be seen the dim outline of the distant hills, and amongst them the crest of Vesuvius.

There was something in the stillness of the place which thrilled the blood of the priest with a ghostly fear as he looked upon this weird mansion, and he longed even for an echo to his noiseless tread as he ascended the flight of steps to the entrance.

He knocked at the door, over which was written an inscription in characters unfamiliar to him ; it opened noiselessly, and a tall slave, without a word or salutation, motioned him to advance.

The wide hall was lighted by hanging lamps of massive bronze, and the walls were decorated with strange shapes in dark and sombre colours—a great contrast to the bright and graceful decoration with which the Italians adorned their apartments. At the end of the hall another slave advanced to meet him.

‘I seek Arbaces,’ said the priest ; but his voice trembled even in his own ear. The slave bowed his head in silence, and conducted Apæcides up a narrow staircase, and through several rooms, until he found himself in a dim and half-lighted chamber, in the presence of the Egyptian.

Arbaces was seated before a small table, on which lay untold several scrolls of papyrus, written in the same character as that outside the door of the mansion. A small tripod stood at a little distance, from which the smoke of incense slowly rose. Near this was a vast globe showing the positions of the stars ; and upon a table lay several instruments of quaint and curious shape the uses of which were unknown to Apæcides. The farther extremity of the room was concealed by a curtain, and an oblong window in the roof admitted the rays of the moon, which mingled sadly with light of the single lamp burning in the centre of the chamber.

‘Seat yourself, Apæcides,’ said the Egyptian, without rising.

The young man obeyed.

‘You ask me,’ began Arbaces, after a short pause, in which he seemed absorbed in thought, ‘you ask me to instruct you in the mightiest secrets which the mind of man can receive : it is the riddle of life itself that you desire me to solve. The answer to that riddle has been revealed to none but the wise, and by them it can be communicated only to the honest inquirer after truth.’ Then in convincing words of clever argument Arbaces proceeded to explain to his pupil the teachings of the religion which he and his disciples, the priests of Isis, professed,

but which they withheld from the people, substituting instead the practice of trickery and deceit.

Long did Arbaces expound, and when at last he ceased, a new and strange experience was in store for Apæcides, for from an adjoining apartment there rose the softest and sweetest strains of music that he had ever heard. The words which were on his lips in answer to the clever arguments of Arbaces died unspoken, the sensitiveness of his nature and the ardour of his spirit were so taken by surprise. He sank on a seat and listened enraptured. And as he listened, a chorus of invisible voices took up the melody, and sang with such exquisite feeling that the music seemed to come from heaven itself.

As the voices died away Arbaces took the hand of the priest, and led him entranced towards the curtain at the far end of the chamber. From behind that curtain there suddenly seemed to burst the light of a thousand lamps, the music rose again, this time grand and triumphant, and with the sound the curtain parted, and revealed to the eyes of Apæcides a scene of wondrous splendour. A vast banquet-room stretched beyond, blazing with light, its warm air laden with the most fragrant perfumes. From the slender columns that supported the airy roof there hung draperies of white studded with golden stars. At either end of the room a fountain cast up its spray, which, catching the rays of light, glittered like countless diamonds. In the centre of the room, as they entered, there rose slowly from the floor a table spread with every kind of delicacy, while the couches which surrounded it were covered with material of the richest texture.

And now from behind the snowy draperies entered groups of beautiful maidens, some with garlands, some with lyres, who surrounded the youth and led him to the banquet. They placed a wreath upon his head, and one, kneeling before him, offered him a bowl of sparkling wine. Apæcides could resist no longer; he took the cup and drank the intoxicating draught. Turning his head to look for Arbaces, who had meanwhile left his side, he beheld him seated beneath a canopy at the upper end of the table, gazing upon him with a smile of approval. He beheld

him, not as heretofore, with dark and simple garments, but wearing a robe of purest white sparkling with gold and jewels, and a crown of white roses and emeralds.

'Drink and feast, my pupil,' said Arbaces. 'What you are now you know full well, behold what you will some day be.'

With this he pointed to a recess in the wall, and Apæcides, looking round, saw on a pedestal the form of a skeleton.

'Start not,' resumed the Egyptian, 'that friendly guest *only reminds us of the shortness of life. Even from its hideous jaws I hear a voice that bids us ENJOY.*'

CHAPTER 7

Takes the reader to the tavern of Burbo, and introduces him to some of the gladiators who frequented it.

OUR story now takes us for a while to a low quarter of Pompeii, the haunt of gladiators and prize-fighters, of the vicious and the penniless. Before the door of a tavern in a narrow and crowded lane stood a group of men whose iron muscles, short, thick necks, and harsh faces, showed plainly that they were gladiators. Within the room were arranged several small tables, round which men were seated, some drinking, some gambling.

'By the gods!' said a gladiator leaning against the doorpost, 'the wine you sell, old Burbo'—and as he spoke he slapped the keeper of the tavern on the back—'is enough to thin the blood in any one's veins.'

The individual thus addressed had already reached the autumn of his life, but he was still so strong and athletic that he might well have opposed himself to the younger *men who stood around, save that his muscles were losing some of their former firmness, his cheeks were swollen and bloated, and his frame grown portly from over-indulgence in wine.*

'None of your insolence with me,' growled the landlord. 'My wine is good enough for a carcase that will soon lie in the dust of the arena.'

'You think thus, do you?' returned the gladiator, with a scornful laugh; 'you will think differently when you see me win the prize; and when I get the reward, as I certainly shall, my first vow shall be to drink no more of your vile stuff.'

The landlord was about to reply in a similar tone, when he was interrupted by the entrance of his wife, who, hearing high words, had hurried in to ascertain the cause of the quarrel. Stratonice was a tall, lean, powerful woman, who, like her husband, had in her younger days fought in the arena, even under the eye of the emperor himself.

'I advise you to be quiet and orderly,' she said, 'for some nobles of the city have sent word to say they are coming here to see you before making up their bets on the great fight at the amphitheatre. They always come here for the purpose, for they know that the best gladiators in Pompeii are to be found at this house.'

'Yes,' said Burbo, drinking off a bowl of wine at a draught, 'a man who has won the prizes I have knows how to welcome the brave.'

'Come here,' said Stratonice, drawing her husband along by the ear—'come here.'

'Not so hard,' growled Burbo; 'your fingers are as strong as those of a gladiator.'

'Hist!' she whispered, 'Calenus has just crept in, disguised, by the back way. I hope he has brought the money.'

'I will join him,' said Burbo; 'meanwhile keep an eye on these men. See that they do not cheat you; they are heroes, to be sure, but they are rogues too.'

In the earlier days of Rome, the priesthood was a profession, not of wealth but of honour; it was open only to citizens of good birth, but afterwards it came to be adopted by men of all ranks, and Calenus, the priest of Isis, was a man of the lowest origin. His relations, though not his parents, were freedmen. He had received a fair education, and had inherited a small legacy from his father, which he had soon exhausted. He became a priest as a last refuge from distress, for the officers of a popular temple could

never complain of the profits of their calling. Calenus had but one relative in Pompeii, and that was Burbo. These two men were united by many dark and dishonourable ties, stronger perhaps than those of blood, and Calenus often sought the back-door of the retired gladiator in order that he might throw off that pretence of virtue which sat so clumsily upon him.

Wrapped in a large mantle, his face almost concealed by its hood, Calenus now sat in the private apartment of the wine-seller. Opposite to him sat the sturdy Burbo, counting on a table between them a little pile of coins which the priest had just poured from his purse.

'You see,' said Calenus, 'that we pay you well, and you ought to thank me for introducing you to so profitable a business.'

'I do, cousin, I do,' replied Burbo, as he put the money into a leather bag, which he placed in his girdle, drawing the buckle more tightly than usual. 'Our little Nydia is a gold-mine to us.'

'She sings and plays divinely,' returned Calenus, 'and those are accomplishments for which my employer always pays well.'

'But what does she do? She seems very frightened, and she talks about an oath she has taken, but she tells us nothing.'

'Nor will I,' answered Calenus; 'I, too, have taken that terrible oath of secrecy.'

At that moment they heard a slight noise at the door, as of one feeling the handle. The priest lowered his hood over his face.

'It is only the blind girl,' whispered the host, as Nydia opened the door and entered the room.

The girl dropped wearily into a seat. Her colour came and went, she beat the ground impatiently with her foot, and then said suddenly in a determined voice: 'Master, you may starve me, you may beat me, you may kill me, but I will go no more to that unholy place!'

'What! you will go no more! Very well, you shall be carried.'

'I will raise the city with my cries,' she said, passionately.

'We will take care of that too ; you shall be gagged.'

'Then may the gods help me !' said Nydia, rising.

'Remember the oath !' said Calenus, in a hollow voice, joining for the first time in the conversation.

At these words the girl trembled, and she clasped her hands imploringly. 'Miserable creature that I am !' she cried, and burst violently into tears.

Just then the door opened and Stratonice appeared in the chamber. Nydia started forward. She fell on her knees and embraced the feet of her mistress, and looking up at her with her sightless eyes, she sobbed :

'Oh, my mistress ! you are a woman, and you have been young like me—save me. I will go no more to those horrible feasts at the house of Arbaces.'

'Nonsense !' shouted Stratonice, dragging her up rudely, 'such fine feelings are not for slaves.'

Nydia drew her aside. 'Hear me,' she said ; 'I have served you faithfully—I, who was brought up as a lady. Ah ! my poor mother, she never dreamed I would come to this.' She dashed a tear from her eye, and went on : 'Command me in anything else, and I will obey ; but I tell you, I will go there no more.'

Stratonice's eyes flashed with rage ; she seized the child by the hair with one hand, and raised the other. She did not strike Nydia, however, but dragging her to the wall, she seized a rope from a hook, and commenced to beat her so mercilessly, that the shrieks of the blind girl rang through the house. That cry was heard by one who had already befriended Nydia, and who was to prove her deliverer in her present trouble.

For while these events had been proceeding in the inner apartment, Clodius and Glaucus, and the other young nobles whom Stratonice had told the gladiators to expect, had arrived and were in the public room of the tavern.

'I know that voice, it is my poor flower-girl !' exclaimed Glaucus, and he darted at once towards the room whence the cry came.

He burst open the door, and beheld Nydia writhing in the grasp of her infuriated mistress. The rope was raised in the air—it was suddenly arrested,

'Monster,' said Glaucus, and with his left hand he caught Nydia from her grasp; 'how dare you thus ill-treat a girl—one of your own sex, a mere child?'

'Is that you, Glaucus?' exclaimed the flower-girl. The tears at once ceased to flow, she clung to his robe, and she almost smiled, so unexpected was her deliverance.

'And how dare you, rude stranger, interfere in my affairs? Give me my slave,' shrieked Stratonice, placing her mighty grasp on the arm of the Grecian.

'What is all this commotion about a slave?' said Burbo. 'Let go the young gentleman, wife; for his sake the impudent thing shall be spared this once.' So saying he drew, or rather dragged, off his ferocious partner.

'I thought when we entered,' said Clodius, 'there was another man present.'

'He has gone.'

For the priest of Isis had indeed thought it wise to disappear.

'Oh, a friend of mine, a quiet fellow, who does not like these quarrels,' said Burbo, carelessly. 'But go, child, you will tear the gentleman's robe if you cling to it so tightly; go, you are pardoned.'

'Oh, do not forsake me,' pleaded Nydia, disregarding the command of her master.

Glaucus looked up at Burbo.

'My good man,' said he, 'this is your slave; she sings well, she is accustomed to the care of flowers,—I wish to make a present of such a slave to a lady. Will you sell her to me?' As he spoke the poor girl trembled with delight, and she looked around, as if she had the power to see.

'Sell our Nydia, no, indeed!' said Stratonice, gruffly.

Nydia sank back with a sigh of despair.

'Nonsense!' said Clodius, haughtily, 'you must, to oblige me. Offend me and your trade is ruined. You know you depend for your very occupation on my kinsman, Pansa. If I say the word, your interest in the amphitheatre will be at an end. Glaucus, the slave is yours.'

Burbo scratched his huge head in his perplexity. 'The girl is worth her weight in gold to me,' he said,

'Name your price,' said Glaucus, 'I can pay.'

'I paid sixty pieces for her; she is worth a hundred now,' said Stratonicæ.

'You shall have two hundred; come to the magistrates at once, and then to my house for your money.'

'I would not have sold her but to oblige the noble Clodius,' said Burbo, in a whining voice. 'And you will speak to Pansa about the post of umpire at the amphitheatre? It would just suit me.'

'You shall have it,' said Clodius, adding in a whisper, 'Yonder Greek can make your fortune; money runs through his fingers like water through a sieve.'

'Then I am to go with you? O happiness!' murmured Nydia to Glaucus.

'Yes, little one, and your hardest task henceforth shall be to sing the songs of Greece to the loveliest lady in Pompeii.'

CHAPTER 8

Narrates the efforts of Arbaces to ensnare Ione.

It has already been said that Ione possessed in an unusual degree the rare gifts of genius and beauty, and these qualities probably accounted for another—a pride which was, after all, the natural consequence of her superiority. The pride of Ione, however, did not show itself in haughtiness and self-esteem, but rather in independence of spirit and a total disregard of the rules and customs of society.

But if Ione was independent, she was also very careful to preserve her womanly character and modesty. The base falsehood which the Egyptian had told her about Glaucus had caused her the greatest distress. From the very hour when Arbaces had left her, she had retired to her private chamber, she had shut out her handmaids, and had refused admission to every one who came to the house. Glaucus was excluded with the rest; he wondered, but could not guess why.

No, she was not denied to all ; there was one person who would not be excluded, who assumed over her actions and her abode the authority of a guardian. Arbaces entered the house like one privileged and at home. With all Ione's independence of character, he had obtained a great influence over her, which she could not shake off. Utterly unaware of his real character, and of his secret love for her, she only felt for him the respect which she considered was due to his wisdom and to his position as her guardian.

Arbaces now made up his mind to exert all his arts towards making Ione his wife, and in this resolve he was encouraged by the success he had gained with her brother.

When Apæcides awoke from his profound sleep the morning after the banquet at the house of Arbaces he was filled with shame and terror. But the Egyptian knew well how to complete his conquest. From the arts of pleasure he led the young priest at once to those of his mysterious wisdom. So strange and wonderful was the knowledge of the ancient Egyptians which Arbaces revealed to him, that his doubts were set at rest, and his pride was flattered that he had been considered worthy to receive such instruction ; and thus the purer lessons of that creed which Olinthus had wished to teach him were swept away from his memory by the skillful teaching of the high-priest of Isis.

The conquest of Apæcides having been thus easily accomplished, the Egyptian could now devote himself to the conquest of his sister.

He had seen Ione daily since the night of the revel, and on each occasion his efforts were directed towards gaining her good opinion of himself and poisoning her mind against Glaucus. It was on the fourth of these visits, as Arbaces and Ione sat alone together, that an important conversation took place.

'You wear your veil at home,' said the Egyptian ; ' that is hardly fair to those whom you honour with your friendship.'

'But to Arbaces,' answered Ione, who indeed had drawn her veil over her face to hide eyes red with weeping—

'to Arbaces, who looks only to the mind, what does it matter if the face is concealed?'

'I do look only to the mind,' replied the Egyptian; 'but it is in the face that I read the mind.'

'You speak like one of the gay nobles of the city,' said Ione, in a tone of pretended merriment.

'Do you think, Ione, that it is from them that I have learned to admire you?' returned Arbaces, in a trembling voice. 'There is a love of the young and thoughtless, but there is also a love which sees not with the eyes, and hears not with the ears, but in which soul answers to soul. Such is the love which I offer to you, cold and stern though you think me to be.'

'And its name is Friendship!' replied Ione. Her answer was quite simple and frank, but it sounded to Arbaces like the reproof of one who could read his inmost thoughts.

'Friendship, indeed!' he exclaimed; 'that is the bond which unites a Clodius to a Glaucus. No, the regard I have for you is not love, and it is not friendship. Give it no name at all—language has no name for it.'

Ione shuddered, though she knew not why; her veil still hid her features, which, if seen by the Egyptian, would have discouraged him at once, for he was never more displeasing to her.

Anxious to change the conversation, she replied, therefore, quite coldly: 'It is natural that the friendship of Arbaces should be loftier than that of others whose pleasures and errors he neither shares nor understands. But tell me, Arbaces, have you seen my brother lately? He has not been to see me for a long time, and when I last saw him he seemed to be very downcast and unhappy. I am afraid he repents the step he took when he became a priest of Isis.'

'Do not be anxious, Ione,' replied the Egyptian: 'it is true that he was sad and troubled; but *he*, Ione, *he* came to me in his distress, and I have removed his doubts. They who trust to Arbaces never repent even for a moment.'

'You comfort me,' answered Ione. 'My dear brother! in his contentment I am happy!'

The conversation now turned upon lighter subjects;

the Egyptian exerted himself to the utmost to please Ione, and she, forgetting her displeasure at his former remarks, was carried away by his marvellous intellect. She once more became quite friendly, and Arbaces, who had been waiting for an opportunity, now seized it.

'You have never been inside my house,' he said; 'I am sure it would interest you. There are rooms which can explain to you what you have often asked me to describe—the fashion of an Egyptian home. My poor abode cannot convey any real idea of the beauty and magnificence of the palaces of Egypt, but it may give you some notion of that civilization which was once so powerful in the world.'

Quite unconscious of the danger which awaited her, Ione readily agreed to the proposal. The next evening was fixed for the visit, and the Egyptian, well satisfied on the whole with the result of his interview, took his departure. Scarcely had he gone, when another visitor sought admission. But we must now return to Glaucus.

CHAPTER 9

Continues the story of Glaucus—and of Nydia.

THE morning sun shone brightly over the small and well-kept garden of the Athenian, as he lay sad and unhappy on the smooth grass, watching the slow movements of a favourite tortoise. He was roused from his meditations by the entrance of Nydia, who came, water-pot in hand, to tend her beloved flowers. She sprinkled them gently with water, stooped to inhale their perfume, and felt along their stems to remove a withered leaf here, or a creeping insect there, which marred their beauty.

'Nydia, my child!' said Glaucus.

At the sound of his voice she turned her face in the direction whence it came, and hastened to his side; and wonderful it was to see how cleverly she made her

way by the shortest path between the flower-beds to her new master.

'Nydia,' said Glaucus, 'it is now three days since you left the house of Burbo—say, are you happy?'

'Oh, so happy!' she sighed.

'And now,' continued Glaucus, 'that you have forgotten your former state, and now that you are more happy. I am about to ask a favour from you.'

'Tell me what I can do for you,' said Nydia.

'Listen,' said Glaucus, 'young as you are, I will confide in you. Have you ever heard the name of Ione?'

The blind girl turned pale, and after a moment's pause, replied with an effort:

'Yes, I have heard that she is from Naples, and very beautiful.'

'Beautiful! words cannot express her loveliness, but from Naples, no; she is a Greek. Nydia, I love her.'

'I thought so,' said Nydia, calmly.

'And you shall tell her so,' continued Glaucus; 'I am about to send you to her. Happy will you be, Nydia; you will live in her presence, and will hear the music of her voice.'

'And am I to go away?'

'You are to go to Ione,' answered Glaucus, in a voice which seemed to say—'what more could you desire?'

Nydia burst into tears.

'Why these tears?' said Glaucus; 'Ione is kind and gentle, and she will be like a sister to you. Will you not do this kindness for me?'

'Well, if I can serve you, command me,' said Nydia. 'See, I weep no longer, I am calm.'

'That is more like Nydia,' said Glaucus; 'go then to Ione. If you are disappointed in her kindness, then return. My home shall be your refuge. I wish it could shelter all the friendless and the distressed. But if I guess truly, my home and Ione's will soon be the same, and then you shall dwell with both.'

A shiver passed through the slight frame of the blind girl, but she wept no more—she was resigned.

'Go then, Nydia, to the house of Ione. Take the choicest

flowers you can find : I will give you the vase to contain them. Take also the lute which I gave you yesterday, upon which you know so well how to play, and give her, too, this letter, in which, after a hundred efforts, I have written some of my thoughts. It is now some days since I have been permitted to see Ione, and there is something strange in this exclusion. But you are quick—learn for me the cause of this unkindness. Speak of me as often as you can—be my friend and plead for me, and you will more than repay the little that I have done for you. Do you understand me ?

‘ Yes.’

‘ And will you serve ?’

‘ Yes.’

Nydia gathered the flowers, and took from the hand of Glaucus the costly and jewelled vase in which they were to be arranged, and then turned and left him. Having passed the threshold, she paused, and looking round, as if she could see the home she was leaving, she murmured :

‘ Three happy days have I spent here ; may peace ever dwell in this house when I have gone. And now my heart tears itself away, and the only sound it utters bids me—die.’

Swiftly she made her way to her destination, and presently a slave stood before Ione with the news that a messenger from Glaucus sought admission.

‘ She is blind,’ said the slave, ‘ and she will give her message to none but yourself.’

The moment she heard the messenger was blind, Ione’s tender heart was touched, and she felt she could not send a cold reply. ‘ What can he want with me ? What message can he send ?’ she thought. The curtain across the door was withdrawn ; a soft step fell upon the marble floor, and Nydia, led by an attendant, entered with her precious gift.

She stood still a moment, as if waiting for some sound to direct her.

‘ Will the noble Ione,’ she said in a low voice, ‘ deign to speak, so that I may come and lay my offerings at her feet ?’

'Fair child,' said Ione, kindly, 'do not attempt to cross this slippery floor, one of my attendants will bring to me what you have to present.'

'I was told to give these things into no hands but yours,' answered the blind girl; and guided by her ear, she walked slowly across the room, knelt before Ione, and offered the vase of flowers.

Ione took it from her hand, and placed it on a table at her side. She then took Nydia by the hand and raised her to her feet.

'I have still something else to present,' she said, and she drew the letter of Glaucus from her vest.

Ione took the letter, and Nydia at once observed the trembling of her hand. With folded arms and downcast eyes, she stood, while Ione, having motioned her attendants to withdraw, opened and read the following letter:

'Glaucus to Ione sends more than he dares to utter. Is Ione ill? Your slaves tell me "No," and that assurance comforts me. Has Glaucus offended Ione? That question I may not ask from *them*. For five days I have not been permitted to enter into your presence. Have they slandered me to you, Ione? You will not believe them. I think of the last time we met, and I am confident there is a bond between us. Deign then to see me, to hear what I have to say, and then exclude me if you will. I meant not to say so soon that I love you, but the words rush to my heart. Accept then my homage and my vows.

'Accept, too, these flowers. I send them by one whom you will receive for her own sake, if not for mine. She, like us, is a stranger in Pompeii; but less happy than we: she is blind and a slave. She is gentle and clever, she is skilled in music and singing, and she is devoted to the care of flowers. She thinks you will love her; if you do not, then send her back to me.

'One word more,—let me be bold, Ione. Why do you think so highly of the dark Egyptian? He has not the air of an honest man, he is not to be trusted. Can it be that he has spoken evil of me to you? I think so, for I left him with you, and I saw how my presence stung him; and

since that day you have not admitted me. Believe nothing wrong that he says of me, and if you do, tell me so at once, for this Ione owes to Glaucus. Farewell! I am glad to think this letter will touch your hand. Once more farewell!

It seemed to Ione, as she read this letter, as though a veil had fallen from her eyes, and from that moment his position in her esteem was fully restored. At every word in that letter her heart smote her. She had doubted his faith, and had believed another, and she had not even allowed to him the right of a common criminal, to know his crime, and to plead in his own defence, and as she thought of these things the tears rolled down her face.

Turning to Nydia, she said: 'Will you sit down while I write an answer to this letter?'

'You *will* answer it, then?' said Nydia. 'Well, the slave that brought me here will take back your answer.'

'For you,' said Ione, 'you shall stay with me; I will be your friend, trust me, your duties shall be light,' and seating herself at a table she wrote the following lines:

'Ione to Glaucus greeting.—Come to me to-morrow. I may have been unjust to you; but I will at least tell you the fault that has been charged against you. Fear the Egyptian no more—fear none. You say you have expressed too much: even in these few words I fear I have done the same. Farewell.'

As Ione brought her his letter, Nydia got up from her seat.

'You have written to Glaucus?' she said.

'I have.'

'And will he thank the messenger who conveys your answer? I mean this,' added Nydia, 'a single word of coldness from you will sadden him; at the slightest kindness he will rejoice. If it be the former, let some one else take back the answer; if the latter, let me. I will return this evening.'

'And why, Nydia,' asked Ione, 'do you wish to be the bearer of the letter?'

'Your answer is kind then !' said Nydia. 'Ah ! how could it be otherwise ? Who could be unkind to Glaucus ?'

'You speak warmly,' said Ione ; 'do you find him kind ?'

'Noble Ione, Glaucus has been to me what no one else has ever been—a *friend*.'

The sadness with which Nydia uttered these simple words affected Ione, and she bent down and kissed her. 'You are grateful,' she said, 'and rightly so. Go, then, and take him this letter—but return. If I am away from home this evening, as perhaps I shall be, your chamber shall be prepared next to my own. Nydia, I have no sister—will you be a sister to me ?'

For reply the blind girl kissed the hand of Ione.

When Nydia left her, Ione sat for some time absorbed in thought. Glaucus loved her ; yes, he owned it. She drew out the letter again, and read it slowly line by line. She wondered how she had ever believed a word against him ; she wondered, too, how the Egyptian had ever obtained such power over her ; she re-read his warning against Arbaces, and a cold chill crept through her. She was awakened from these thoughts by the entry of a maid who came to say that the hour appointed for her visit to the house of Arbaces had arrived. Her first thought was to refuse to go ; her second was to laugh at her own fears, and hastily putting on her walking robe, she took her way to the gloomy abode of the Egyptian.

CHAPTER 10

Follows the movements of Nydia in her efforts to save Ione.

'To-morrow—how can I wait until to-morrow ?' exclaimed Glaucus, as he finished reading the letter of Ione. Then he bade Nydia relate to him every detail of the interview, and repeat every word Ione had uttered. Over and over again did she recite the brief conversation that had taken place, and twilight had already begun to

fade before he finally dismissed her with another letter and with fresh flowers for her mistress.

Scarcely had she gone, when Clodius and some of his gay companions broke in upon Glaucus, and as he had not been out the whole day, he gladly accepted their proposal to stroll through the streets of the city, now thronged with people and brilliant with lights.

In the meantime Nydia had reached the house of Ione, and not finding her mistress at home, she asked carelessly where she had gone.

The answer she received startled her. 'To the house of Arbaces?' she repeated—'Impossible!'

'It is true, little one,' said the slave; 'she has known the Egyptian a long time.'

'And has she often visited him before?' she asked.

'Never till now,' was the reply, 'and if rumour is true, it would be better if she had not ventured there this time. But she never hears the stories which reach our ears.'

Nydia hesitated a moment, and then, putting down the flowers, and calling the slave who had accompanied her, she left the house without another word.

Not until she had got half-way back to the house of Glaucus did she break her silence, and then she only murmured inwardly,—'She cannot know of the dangers into which she is plunging herself. Shall I save her? Yes, I will try my utmost, for the sake of Glaucus.'

When she arrived at the house of the Athenian, she learnt that he had gone out, no one knew where, and that he would probably not be back before midnight.

Nydia groaned. What was she to do? She sank upon a seat in the hall, but immediately sprang up again. 'Do you know,' she asked the slave, 'whether Ione has any relative or intimate friend in Pompeii?'

'What a question!' replied the slave. 'Every one knows that Ione has a rich young brother, who has been foolish enough to become a priest of Isis.'

'A priest of Isis! What is his name?'

'Apæcides.'

'Now I know it all,' muttered Nydia. 'Brother and sister, then, are both to be victims! Apæcides! yes,

that was the name I heard in— Ah! he knows the danger which awaits his sister. I will go to him.'

Seizing the staff that always guided her steps, she hastened to the neighbouring temple of Isis, followed by the slave whom Glaucus had appointed to attend upon her whenever she went out.

She found the temple deserted.

'There is no one here,' said the slave. 'What do you want, or whom? The priests do not live in the temple, you know.'

'Call out,' she said, impatiently; 'there is always one priest at least watching the temple night and day.'

The slave called—no one answered.

'Can you see no one?'

'No one.'

'You are mistaken; I hear a sigh, look again.'

The slave, wondering and grumbling, looked round, and before one of the altars he beheld a form bent in meditation.

'I see a figure,' said he, 'and its white garments are those of a priest.'

'O priest of Isis!' cried Nydia, 'servant of the Most Ancient, hear me!'

'Who calls, and what do you require?' said a low and melancholy voice. 'This is no time for conference; depart, and disturb me not; the night is sacred to the gods.'

'I seem to know that voice, although I have heard it but once before,' said Nydia. 'Are you not he whom I seek—the priest Apæcides?'

'That is my name,' replied the priest, coming forward from the altar.

'The gods be praised!' she exclaimed fervently.

Waving her hand to the slave, she bade him retire to a distance, and then turning to the priest she said, 'Are you indeed Apæcides?'

'If you know me, can you not recall my features?'

'I am blind,' said Nydia; 'my ears are my eyes, and they recognize you; but swear that you are he.'

Burning with curiosity to know what she had to disclose, Apæcides swore that he was the person she sought.

'Hush ! speak low—bend near,' she went on rapidly. 'You know Arbaces ? Have you laid flowers at the feet of the dead in his house ? Have you taken the awful vow ? Listen, you have a sister ?'

'Speak !' he gasped, 'what of her ?'

'You know the banquets of the dead, stranger—they please you, perhaps—say, would it please you to have your sister partake of them ?'

'He dare not ! girl ; you mock me !'

'I speak the truth ; and while I speak, Ione is in the halls of Arbaces—his guest for the first time. You know whether there is peril. Farewell, I have warned you.'

'Stay ! stay !' cried the priest, passing his thin hand over his brow in his perplexity. 'If this is true, what can be done to save her ? They may not admit me, and I cannot find my way about his mansion. O Justice ! how cruelly am I punished !'

'I will dismiss my slave,' said Nydia, 'and I will be your guide. I will lead you to the private door of the house, and will whisper to you the word which gives admission. Take some weapon : it may be necessary.'

'Wait an instant,' said Apæcides, and retiring into a cell near-by he reappeared in a few moments wrapped in a large cloak, much worn by all classes at that time, and which completely concealed his priestly dress. 'Now,' said he, grinding his teeth, 'if Arbaces has dared—but he dare not ! he dare not ! Why should I suspect him ? Is he so base ? I will not think it.'

Muttering thus, Apæcides, with his silent companion, hastened towards the house of the Egyptian. They were not half way, when they fell in with Glaucus, who needed no persuasion to make one of their party.

CHAPTER II

Reveals the warnings of the stars, and narrates the events which happened on the occasion of Ione's visit to the house of Arbaces.

WE must now go back to the early hours of this eventful day. As the first streaks of dawn began to appear, the

Egyptian, sleepless and alone, sat on the top of the lofty tower which was a striking feature of his mansion, where a turreted wall effectually concealed him from observation. It was the hour above all others sacred to the daring science of the Egyptian—the science which could read human destinies in the stars. On a table before him lay a scroll, filled with strange and mysterious signs, and Arbaces sat there, his head on his hand, thinking deeply about the results of his observations.

‘*Again* do the stars warn me! Some danger, then, certainly awaits me!’ he said slowly; ‘some danger, violent and sudden in its nature. The stars threaten me. Let me look again—“Beware,” they say, “how you pass under ancient roofs, besieged walls, or overhanging cliffs—a stone hurled from above bears an evil destiny for you!” And this peril is to come at no distant date, although I cannot read the exact day and hour. Yet, if I escape this danger—ah! if I escape—the rest of my existence is to be as bright and clear as the noonday sun. Honours, happiness, success are in store for me. What then with such a destiny *beyond* the peril, shall I yield to the peril itself?’

The Egyptian rose and paced rapidly up and down the narrow space. And as he mused, a fixed determination settled in his features. Nothing should prevent him in his purpose regarding Ione. The stars had long foretold to him this year, and even the present month, as the time of some dread disaster, threatening life itself, and if he had to die, he was resolved that he would first make Ione his own.

His morning watch had a depressing effect upon the Egyptian during the day, but as the evening approached, and the hour appointed for Ione’s visit drew near, he assumed that serene and undisturbed air so familiar to all who knew him.

Ione experienced the same feeling of awe which had crept over her brother as she entered the spacious hall. The tall African slave was there to admit her, and as he motioned to her to proceed, she saw Arbaces half-way up the hall, who had come to receive her in a magnificent robe

which glittered with jewels. Although it was still broad daylight outside, the mansion, according to the custom of the rich, was artificially darkened, while lamps shed a still and subdued light over the rich floors and ivory roofs.

'Fair Ione,' said Arbaces, as he bent to touch her hand, 'your presence brings beauty to my poor abode—your eyes light up my halls.'

'You must not talk to me thus,' said Ione, smiling; 'you must remember that you have yourself taught me to scorn flattery, and to disdain praise; would you contradict your own teaching?'

There was something so simple and frank in her manner as she made this remark, that the Egyptian continued the conversation charmed rather than abashed. He led her through the chambers of the house, and even the rich Ione was fascinated by its splendour and magnificence. In the walls were set pictures of priceless value, and lights shone over statues carved by the best artists of Greece. Cabinets of gems filled the spaces between the columns; gold and jewels seemed to be lavished everywhere.

'I have often heard of your wealth,' said Ione, wonderingly, 'but I never dreamed you were so rich.'

'Would that I could make it all into one crown for you!' said Arbaces.

'The weight would only crush me,' said Ione, with a laugh.

'But you do not disdain riches, Ione; only those who are wealthy know what life is capable of. Gold is the mightiest, and at the same time the most obedient, of slaves.'

The artful Arbaces sought to dazzle Ione by his wealth and his eloquence; he wished to arouse in her a desire to be mistress of all that she saw; he hoped she would estimate the owner by his possessions.

Suddenly, as they stood in a hall hung with draperies of silver and white, the Egyptian clapped his hands, and, as if by magic, a banquet ascended from the floor, and at the same time, a throne with a crimson canopy rose at the feet of Ione, while from behind the curtains there swelled the softest music.

Arbaces seated himself at the feet of Ione, and children young and beautiful ministered to the feast.

The banquet over, the music sank into almost inaudible strains, and Arbaces thus addressed Ione : ' Have you ever aspired to peer into the future, and to behold what Fate has in store for you ? '

Ione trembled ; she thought of Glaucus, and sighed as she trembled. Were their destinies to be united ? Half awed, half believing, she remained silent for some moments, and then answered.

' It may terrify me : the knowledge of the future will perhaps only embitter the present ! '

' Not so, Ione. I have myself looked upon your future, and nothing could be more alluring. Come, then, and see your fate, so that you may enjoy it beforehand.

Again the heart of Ione murmured ' Glaucus ' ; she uttered a half-audible assent ; the Egyptian rose and led her across the room—the curtains were parted by unseen hands, and the music broke into a louder and gladder strain ; they passed between two rows of columns, and descended by road steps into a garden. The evening had already fallen, and the moon was high in the sky.

' Where are you leading me ? ' Ione asked in wonder.

' Only yonder,' replied Arbaces, pointing to a small building at the other end of the garden. ' There is the temple dedicated to the Fates.'

They passed into a narrow hall at the end of which hung a black curtain. Arbaces lifted it, and Ione, entering, found herself in total darkness.

' Do not be alarmed,' said the Egyptian, ' the light will rise instantly.' As he spoke a soft subdued light gradually diffused itself, and Ione could see her new surroundings. She found herself in a chamber of moderate size, hung everywhere with black. In the centre was a small altar, on which stood a bronze tripod, and at one side was a lofty granite column surmounted by an enormous head, which represented the Egyptian goddess. Arbaces stood before the altar, laid a garland upon it, and poured into the tripod the contents of a brazen vase, which immediately leaped into a blue darting, irregular flame. The Egyptian

drew back and muttered some words in an unfamiliar language ; the curtain at the back of the altar immediately began to wave to and fro, then slowly parted, and disclosed an indistinct and pale landscape, which gradually grew clearer and higher as Ione gazed upon it. Into this scene there presently glided a dim shape which rested opposite Ione. As this shape gradually assumed form and features, lo ! Ione beheld herself.

The scene behind the figure then dissolved, and was succeeded by the representation of a gorgeous palace ; a throne stood in the centre of its hall—the dim forms of slaves and guards were arranged around it, and a pale hand held over the throne a richly jewelled crown.

A new actor now appeared ; he was clothed from head to foot in a dark robe—his face concealed—he knelt at the feet of the shadowy Ione—he took her hand—he pointed to the throne as if inviting her to ascend it.

Ione's heart beat violently.

' Shall we reveal the identity of the figure ? ' whispered the voice of Arbaces.

' Ah ! yes ! ' answered Ione, softly.

Arbaces raised his hand—the dark robe fell from the figure—and Ione shrieked—for the person who knelt before her in the vision was none other than Arbaces himself.

' This is indeed your fate ! ' whispered the Egyptian in her ear. ' You are destined to be the bride of Arbaces.'

The black curtain closed, and Arbaces himself, the real living Arbaces, was kneeling at her feet.

' Oh, Ione,' he said passionately, ' listen to one who has struggled in vain against his love. I have sought the world over, and have found none like you. I, who never knelt to mortal being, kneel before you. Do not reject me.'

Although for the time in the power of this fearful man, Ione was not afraid ; the respectfulness of his words reassured her. But she was confused and surprised, and it was some moments before he could reply.

' Rise, Arbaces ! ' she said at length, ' and if I am to believe that you are really in earnest, listen to me. You

have been my guardian, and my adviser ; for this new character I was not prepared. Think not that I am insensible of the honour you do me, but, say—can you hear me calmly ?’

‘Yes, though your words were as lightning, and could blast me.’

‘*I love another !*’ said Ione, in a quiet but firm voice.

‘It is impossible ! Do not mock me—I have surprised you—say that you love not me, but say not that you love another !’

‘Alas !’ began Ione ; and then, terrified at his angry look, she burst into tears.

Arbaces came nearer, but Ione sprang back, and as she did so, the letter she had received from Glaucus that morning fell to the ground. Arbaces saw it and seized it. Rapidly his eyes ran over the writing ; Ione dared not look at him, so she did not see the deadly paleness which came over his face. He read it to the end, and then, as he let the letter fall from his hand, he said in a voice of assumed calmness :

‘Is the writer of this the man you love ?’

Ione sobbed, but did not answer.

‘Speak !’ he said more fiercely.

‘It is—it is !’

‘And his name—it is written here—his name is Glaucus !’

Ione looked round, and darted towards the door by which she had entered, but the Egyptian sprang forward and seized her arm. As he did so, her foot slipped, she gave a loud shriek, and fell at the base of the column which supported the head of the Egyptian goddess.

At that instant the curtain was rudely torn aside, and Arbaces felt a fierce strong grasp upon his shoulder. Turning his head, he beheld the flashing eyes of Glaucus, and the pale, worn, but threatening countenance of Apæcides.

‘Ah,’ he muttered, as he glared from one to the other, ‘who has sent you here ?’

‘Fate,’ answered Glaucus ; and he closed at once with the Egyptian. Meanwhile, Apæcides raised his sister, who was in a dead faint, from the ground ; he was too

weak, however, to carry even her delicate frame, so he placed her on a seat, and stood by her, a knife in his hand, watching the contest between Glaucus and the Egyptian, and ready to plunge his weapon into the breast of Arbaces should he prove victorious. The two men were locked in each other's grasp—the hand of each seeking the throat of the other. Both were strong beyond the ordinary power of men—both filled with relentless hate; they wound round each other—they swayed from end to end of their confined arena—they uttered cries of wrath and revenge; now they were before the altar—now at the base of the column where the struggle had commenced. They both drew back for breath, Arbaces leaning against the column—Glaucus a few paces away.

'O ancient goddess!' exclaimed Arbaces, clasping the column, and raising his eyes towards the sacred image it supported, 'protect thy servant—show thy displeasure against this infidel who profanes thy temple and assails the priest.'

As he spoke, the still and massive features of the goddess seemed suddenly to fill with life, and the eyes glowed like balls of fire, fixing then wrathful gaze upon the face of the Greek. Appalled by this sudden and mysterious answer to the prayer of his foe, Glaucus paled at the uncanny sight—his knees trembled—he stood, seized with panic, helpless and aghast! Arbaces gave him no breathing time to recover his courage: 'Die, wretch!' he shouted, in a voice of thunder, as he sprang upon the Greek. Taken thus by surprise, Glaucus lost his footing upon the slippery marble—he slid—he fell, and Arbaces put his foot on the breast of his fallen enemy. Apæcides, taught by his knowledge of Arbaces and his arts, had not shared the feats of Glaucus; he rushed forward—his knife gleamed in the air—but the watchful Arbaces caught his arm as it descended—one wrench of his powerful hand snatched the weapon from the weak grasp of the priest—one sweeping blow stretched him on the ground—and with a loud and triumphant yell, Arbaces brandished the knife aloft. At that awful moment, the floor shook under them with a violent throb—a mightier power than

the Egyptian was abroad—the Dread Demon of the Earthquake. Far and wide rolled the hoarse and rumbling sound—the curtains in the temple waved as if blown by a storm—the altar rocked—the tripod reeled—the pillar swayed from side to side—the head of the goddess tottered and fell from its pedestal,—and as the Egyptian stooped above his intended victim, right upon his bended form, between the shoulder and the neck, struck the marble mass ! The blow stretched him, suddenly, without a sound or a movement, upon the floor, apparently crushed by the very divinity he had called upon !

‘The Earth has preserved her children,’ said Glaucus, staggering to his feet. ‘Let us praise the providence of the gods !’ He assisted Apæcides to rise, and then turned upward the face of the Egyptian ; it seemed set as if in death, and blood trickled from the open lips. Again the earth shook beneath their feet, and they were compelled to cling to each other for support. Then the movement ceased as suddenly as it began ; they tarried no longer ; Glaucus lifted Ione lightly in his arms, and they fled from the dreadful place. They did not heed the strangers whom they saw fleeing in all directions. They were occupied only with their own fears, and they uttered but one cry—‘The Earthquake ! The Earthquake !’ Hastening along Apæcides and his companions passed through a small open gate, and there outside, on a little mound, the pale moonlight revealed the huddled figure of the blind girl—she was weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER 12

Describes the introduction of Apæcides to the Christian meeting-house.

ON the morning after the earthquake Apæcides and Olinthus chanced to meet on the bank of a stream which flowed outside the town. The mind of the young priest was so overwrought with the events of the previous

evening, that the very words of the Christian's salutation, 'Peace be with you,' seemed to comfort him, and he readily agreed to the suggestion of Olinthus that they should rest awhile under the kindly shade of a tree near by.

'Have you been happy,' began Olinthus, 'since you fled from me some nights ago? Do you find peace of mind under those priestly robes? Does the faith of Isis give you comfort?'

'Alas!' answered Apæcides, sadly, 'I am a most unhappy man. From my childhood I have striven after virtue. I have envied the holiness of men who live in caves and temples, and forgo the pleasures of the world; but in searching after truth I have only become the minister of falsehood. On the evening when we last met, I was filled with hopes which had been instilled by that impostor, Arbaces, whom I ought to have known better. But the veil is now removed from my eyes, and I see a villain where once I saw a hero. I am in the deepest despair—teach me your faith—solve my doubts if you can.'

'I do not wonder,' answered the Christian, 'that you have erred, or that you are filled with doubts. But there are new truths for him who has ears to hear, and heaven is revealed to him who has eyes to see. Listen!'

And with all the warmth of one who is sure of his own belief, and anxious to impart the truth to others, Olinthus began his story, and long and earnestly he talked to Apæcides of the miracles, the sufferings, and the love of Christ. He spoke of forgiveness for the sinner, and rest for the weary, and the very sorrow which Apæcides felt for his misdeeds attracted him to one who whispered of the 'joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.'

'Come,' said Olinthus, as he perceived the effects his words had produced—'come to the humble hall in which we meet—a select and faithful few; listen to our prayers, take part in our sacrifice—not of victims, nor of garlands, but of the heart. Come, oh, come! lose not another moment. This is the Lord's day, the day we set apart for our devotions. Though we meet usually at night, some are gathered together even now. What joy there will be if we can bring one stray lamb into the fold!'

There seemed to Apæcides something so kind and gentle in the spirit of Olinthus, who cared only for the happiness of others, that he was touched and subdued. He paused a moment, looked at his dress, thought of Arbaces with a shudder, then lifted his eyes to the open, anxious face of Olinthus. He drew his cloak closely around him so as completely to conceal his robes, and said, 'Lead on, I follow.'

Olinthus pressed his hand joyfully, and then descending to the river's edge, he hailed a boat. They stepped into it—an awning overhead protecting them from the sun and screening them from observation—and they were soon skimming over the smooth surface of the stream. From one of the boats that passed them there came the soft music of the lyre.

'So,' said Olinthus sadly, 'do the careless and the luxurious drift into the ocean of storm and ruin!'

Their boat reached the shore at a place where a narrow street of small and mean houses stretched away from the bank. They landed, dismissed the boat, and Olinthus leading the way, soon arrived at the closed door of a house somewhat larger than its neighbours. He knocked thrice—the door was opened and closed again, as Apæcides followed his guide across the threshold.

They then came to the door of an inner chamber, and Olinthus, knocking, said, 'Peace be with you.' A voice from within returned, 'Peace with whom?' 'The Faithful,' answered Olinthus, and the door opened. Apæcides found himself in a room of moderate size, in which were seated twelve or fourteen persons, silent and absorbed in thought.

They lifted their eyes without speaking as Olinthus entered, and he himself, without addressing any one, immediately knelt down, and Apæcides saw by his moving lips that he prayed inwardly. This done, Olinthus turned to the congregation and said: 'Men and brethren, marvel not to behold among you a priest of Isis; he has been in search of leading from the blind, but now the Spirit has come upon him, and he desires to see, to hear, and to understand.'

"Let him do so," said one of the assembly, whom

Apæcides saw to be a man even younger than himself. "Let him do so," repeated all the rest with one voice.

'We do not bind you to secrecy,' said Olinthus to Apæcides, 'we do not ask you to take an oath not to betray us. Betray us to the crowd if you will: we are above death, and would walk cheerfully to the den of the lion. What is death to a criminal is eternity to the Christian. You come among us an inquirer. may you remain as a convert! As for our religion—you shall now hear it. Approach, Medon'—beckoning to an old slave—'you are the only one among us who is not a free man. But in heaven the last shall be first: so with us. Unfold your scroll, read and explain.'

We will not repeat the lecture of Medon, the doctrines which were then new and strange are now familiar. After its conclusion an incident occurred that greatly touched Apæcides. A very gentle knock was heard at the door, the password was given and replied to, the door opened, and two little children entered timidly. The eldest member of the congregation opened his arms—the children crept to his breast—and he smiled as he caressed them. Then opening his scroll he taught the little ones to repeat after him that beautiful prayer, which we still call the Lord's Prayer, and he told them, in simple words, of the love of God for little children, and how not a sparrow falls without His knowledge.

Then an inner door opened gently and a very old man entered the chamber, leaning on a staff. At his presence the whole assembly rose out of respect for his years. 'My children, God be with you!' he said, stretching out his arms.

'Father,' said Olinthus, 'behold a stranger in our meeting!'

'Let me bless him,' said the old man, and the people made way. Apæcides approached as if by instinct, and fell on his knees before him—the old man laid his hands on the priest's head and blessed him, but not aloud. As his lips moved, his eyes were upturned, and tears—the tears that good men shed at the happiness of another—flowed fast down his cheeks.

The children were on either side of the convert ; and his heart had become as the heart of a little child.

CHAPTER 13

Looks into the heart of Nydia.

AUGUST was now far advanced, and the next month Glaucus was to be married. He had no time to spare for his gay companions ; he was constantly with Ione. The mornings they devoted to music ; in the evenings they forsook the gaiety of the city for the peacefulness of the bay. The earth shook no more—indeed, the people of Pompeii had almost forgotten that terrible warning of their approaching doom, and as for Glaucus, he believed the earthquake to have been a special act of Providence to save Ione.

Of Arbaces they heard only that he still lived. Stretched on a bed of suffering, he recovered slowly from the shock he had received. Of necessity he left Ione and Glaucus alone—but it was only to ponder over the hour and the means of revenge.

Alike in the mornings at the house of Ione, and in their evening excursions on the water, Nydia was usually their sole companion. They did not guess the secret feelings which occupied her, they simply took an interest in her on account of her affliction, an interest which was perhaps the kinder from the very waywardness of her nature, sometimes light and happy, sometimes cold and sullen.

Glaucus had been the first to speak kindly to Nydia, and his kindness had made so deep an impression on her mind, that when he had left Pompeii the previous year she had treasured up in her heart almost every word he had ever uttered to her. Even the task she had set herself of tending his garden in his absence only served to keep the memory of him in her mind.

These innocent feelings which Nydia cherished, at first those of pure gratitude, she suddenly found on the return of Glaucus after a year's absence to be feelings of love. Then came his new act of kindness in rescuing her from the tyranny of Burbo, and the few happy days as his slave—only to be succeeded by the cruel discovery that he loved another, and this other she was to serve. What wonder was it that to her everything seemed to go wrong, to be discordant and out of tune? The state of mind thus produced was too strained to be borne long. Her health gave way, her cheeks paled—and tears came unbidden to her eyes more often than before.

One morning, when she went as usual to the garden of Glaucus, she found him engaged with a merchant of the town, selecting jewels for Ione—jewels that were fated never to adorn the person for whom they were intended.

'Put down your water-pot, and come here, Nydia,' said Glaucus. 'Here is a chain for your neck. There, I have put it on. It suits her well, doesn't it?' he added, turning to the jeweller.

'Beautifully!' answered the jeweller, for jewellers knew how to flatter then, even as now. 'But when these ear-rings glitter in the ears of Ione, *then* you will see whether my jewels add anything to beauty.'

'Ione?' repeated Nydia.

'Yes,' replied Glaucus; 'I am choosing a present for Ione, but I cannot find one worthy of her.'

He was astonished, as he spoke, to see Nydia tear the chain from her neck and dash it on the ground.

'How is this? What, Nydia, does it not please you? Are you offended?'

'You always treat me as a slave and a child,' she replied, sobbing, and she turned hastily away to the opposite corner of the garden.

Glaucus did not recall her; he was displeased. He continued to examine the jewels, and was finally persuaded by the merchant to buy them all.

When he had completed his purchase, he entered his chamber, dressed, mounted his chariot, and went to the house of Ione.

He spent the forenoon with her, went thence to the baths, took his afternoon meal at a fashionable restaurant, and then returned home to change his dress for his evening visit to Ione. He passed through his garden, but being absorbed with his thoughts he did not observe the form of the poor blind girl, bending in exactly the same place where he had left her. Though he had not seen her, she had at once recognized his step; she had been counting the moments to his return. Scarcely had he seated himself in his chamber, than she entered, and kneeling before him, held up a handful of flowers—a gentle peace-offering—her eyes streaming with tears.

‘I have offended you,’ she said, sobbing, ‘and for the first time. I would rather die than cause you pain—say that you forgive me. See! I have picked up the chain: I have put it on; I will never part with it, because you gave it to me.’

‘Think no more about it, Nydia,’ he replied. ‘But why, my child, were you so angry? I could not understand the cause.’

‘Do not ask,’ she said; ‘you know I am only a child—you often tell me so. A child cannot give a reason for every mistake.’

‘But you will soon be a child no more, and if you would have us treat you as a woman, you must learn to govern these little outbursts. Do not think I am finding fault; I am only speaking for your happiness.’

‘It is true,’ said Nydia; ‘I must learn to govern myself. I must hide my feelings—that is a woman’s duty. But, Glaucus, when I listen to you I am always calm; will you not be my guide and adviser?’

‘Your heart will be your best guide when you have learned to control it.’

‘That will never be,’ sighed Nydia, wiping away her tears.

‘Say not so; the first effort is the only difficult one,’ he replied.

‘I have made many first efforts,’ she said. ‘But you, do you find self-control easy? Can you conceal your love for Ione?’

'Love! ah! that is a very different thing.'

'I thought so!' returned Nydia, with a sad smile. 'Glaucus, will you take my poor flowers? Do with them what you will—give them to Ione,' she added after a little pause.

'No, Nydia, I will not give your pretty flowers to any one. Sit here and weave them into a garland; I will wear it to-night; it will not be the first your fingers have woven for me.'

The poor girl sat down delighted, and began quickly and gracefully to perform her task. The tears dried on her cheeks—a happy smile was on her lips—childlike, she lived only in the present. Yes, she was happy and forgetful! And this was one of those brief and rare moments in her young and troubled life which were absolutely free from care.

Her task completed, she set out on her return to the house of her mistress. As she walked rapidly through the chill evening air, her thoughts were busy. 'How happy Ione must be,' she mused, 'to have Glaucus constantly near her! And she can see him too!' She was suddenly interrupted in her reflections by a voice:

'Blind flower-girl, where are you going? Have you sold all your flowers?' it inquired.

The person who thus addressed Nydia was Julia, the daughter of the merchant, Diomed. Her veil was half-raised, and she was accompanied by her father—a slave carrying a lantern before them.

'Do you not remember my voice?' continued Julia. 'I am the daughter of Diomed the wealthy.'

'Ah! forgive me; yes, I do recall your voice. No, noble Julia, I have no flowers to sell.'

'I heard that you were purchased by Glaucus; is that true, pretty slave?' asked Julia.

'I now serve Ione,' replied Nydia, evasively.

'Ah! so it is true then—'

'Come, come!' interrupted Diomed, with his cloak over his mouth, 'the night grows cold; I cannot stay here while you chatter to that blind girl; come along, let her follow you home, if you wish to talk to her.'

'Do, child,' said Julia, with the air of one not accustomed to a refusal; 'I have so many questions to ask you; come.'

'I cannot, to-night, for it is getting late,' answered Nydia. 'I must go home; I am not free, noble Julia.'

'What, will the gentle Ione scold you? Come to-morrow then, do—remember I am your old friend.'

'I will obey your wishes,' answered Nydia; and as Diomed again impatiently called his daughter, she was obliged to proceed without asking the question she had most of all wished to put to Nydia.

CHAPTER 14

Relates how Ione heard something of the Christian message from Apæcides—and Glaucus.

MEANWHILE we return to Ione. The interval that elapsed between the two visits of Glaucus that day had not been very cheerful, which may seem strange, since it had been spent with her brother, whom she had not seen since he had assisted in saving her from the Egyptian.

Occupied with his own serious and perplexing affairs, the young priest had thought little of his sister; their life-long affection seemed to have been suddenly arrested. Often, in the midst of her new happiness, and bright hopes, Ione would sigh to think of the sad face of her brother, and she wondered how a life devoted to the gods could make so unhappy one who served them so well.

But this day, when he visited her, there was a new calm on the features of Apæcides—a quieter expression than she had seen for years.

'May the gods bless you, my brother!' said she, embracing him as he entered.

'The gods! Do not speak so vaguely, Ione; perhaps there is but *one* God!'

'My brother!' she exclaimed.

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'What if the faith of Christ be true? What if God be a king—One—Invisible—Alone? It may be,' he continued.

'Can we believe it? All the beautiful world emptied of spirits! No God in the mountain and the river, the breeze and the sunshine!' Ione answered, as any believer in the old mythology of the ancients would have answered, and we can judge by that reply how severe was the opposition which Christianity had to endure in its early days.

Apæcides had not yet formally adopted the Christian faith, but he was on the brink of it, and he already believed the teaching of Olinthus.

His reply therefore was so passionate, that Ione feared his mind might have become affected. 'My brother,' she said, 'your hard duties have shattered your reason. Come to me, and give me your hand. Forgive me if I do not understand you; think only that I could not offend you.'

'Ione,' said Apæcides, regarding her tenderly, 'can I think that your kind heart may be destined to an eternity of torment?'

'The gods forbid!' said Ione, using the phrase commonly uttered to avert some evil omen.

The words, and still more the superstition implied in them, offended the ear of Apæcides. He rose, muttered something to himself, and turned from the chamber; then, stopping half-way, he gazed longingly at his sister, and extended his arms.

Ione flew to them in joy; he kissed her earnestly, and then he said sadly:

'Farewell, my sister! When we next meet we may be as nothing to each other. Let, then, this embrace remind you of our childhood, when faith and hope were the same for both of us. Now the tie is to be broken!'

And with these strange words he left the house.

It is not surprising, then, that when Glaucus arrived for his evening visit he found Ione in tears. He soon drew from her an account of her interview with her brother, but her account was so confused that he, like Ione, was quite at a loss to understand the meaning and intention of Apæcides.

‘Have you heard much of this new sect of which my brother spoke?’ she asked of Glaucus.

‘I have often heard of individual Christians,’ he replied, ‘but of their teaching I know nothing, except that they seem unnatural and austere. They live apart from other people, they have no sympathy with the ordinary amusements of life, and they utter awful threats about the coming destruction of the world. Yet,’ continued Glaucus, after a pause, ‘some of them have been men of great power and genius. I well remember my father speaking of one great man at Athens; I think his name was PAUL. My father was among a large crowd which collected to hear this man preach. In that great throng, he said, there was not a single murmur,—the jests and the noise which usually greeted our own orators were hushed for him; his very appearance commanded silence, even before a word had left his lips. When he raised his hand to speak, it was with the power of a man filled with the Spirit of God.

“Men of Athens!” he is reported to have said on one occasion, “I find among you an altar with the inscription—TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Ye worship in ignorance the same God whom I serve. He has been UNKNOWN to you until now; I will reveal Him to you.”

‘Then he began to preach the great Maker of all things—the Lord of heaven and earth, who, he said, dwelt not in temples made with hands. “Think you,” he cried, “that the Invisible God is like your statues of gold and marble? Think you that He Who made the universe requires a sacrifice from you?” Then he spoke of fearful times coming, of the end of the world, of the rising of the dead, of which an assurance had been given in the resurrection of the mighty One whose religion he came to preach. As he thus spoke, a murmur was heard, and the philosophers in the crowd began to mutter their contempt, but the heart of the common people was touched and thrilled, and they trembled, though they knew not why, for truly the stranger had the voice and the power of a man to whom “The Unknown God” had committed the preaching of His faith.’

Ione listened with rapt attention to this recital, and the serious and earnest manner of Glaucus made it apparent that he himself had been deeply impressed by what he had heard from his father, who as one of the audience on the Athenian hill had received the first tidings of the word of Christ.

CHAPTER 15

Tells of the love of a son for his father.

THE door of Diomed's house stood open, and Medon, the old slave, sat at the bottom of the steps leading up to it. On the opposite side of the road and just inside the city gate, was a spacious inn, at which those who came on business or pleasure to Pompeii often stopped to refresh themselves.

'Have you heard the news, old Medon?' said a young woman with a pitcher in her hand, as she paused for a moment on her way to the inn to gossip with the slave at Diomed's door.

'The news! what news?' he asked, raising his eyes from the ground.

'Why, there passed through the gate this morning such a visitor to Pompeii! But perhaps you were not awake.'

'Oh!' said the slave unconcernedly.

'Yes, a present from a Roman nobleman.'

'A present! I thought you said a visitor?'

'Both a visitor and a present, old dullard,' she snapped. 'It was a most beautiful young tiger for the coming games. I shall not sleep a wink until I see it; and they say it has such a roar!'

With this remark she gathered up her skirts from the dusty road and stepped lightly across to the crowded inn.

'My poor son!' murmured the slave, 'is it for the amusement of such beings as this that you are to be butchered?'

The old man's head sank sorrowfully on his breast. He remained silent and absorbed, every now and then wiping his eye with the corner of his sleeve. His heart was with his son, but he did not hear the quick firm step that approached, and he did not raise his eyes until the new-comer, who had paused opposite to him, had uttered the one word—'Father!'

'My boy! my Lydon! is it indeed you?' said the old man, joyfully. Ah! you were at that moment in my thoughts.'

'I am glad to hear it, my father,' said the gladiator, respectfully touching the feet and beard of the slave; 'may we soon be always present with each other—not in thought only.'

'Yes, my son—but not in this world,' replied Medon, mournfully.

'Do not talk thus, father,—I am sure I shall win the day, and then the gold I gain will buy your freedom.'

'My boy! my boy!' said the old slave, as, slowly ascending the steps, he conducted his son to his own little chamber; generous and affectionate as are your motives, the deed itself is wrong: to risk your life for your father's freedom, that is noble; but the price of victory is the life of another, that is sin! I would rather be a slave for ever than purchase liberty on such terms!'

'Hush, father,' replied Lydon, impatiently; you have learned strange doctrines in this new faith of yours, of which I do not understand a single word. Forgive me, if I offend you; but just think! What are these creatures against whom I shall contend? If you knew them you would say I purified the earth by removing one of them. They are like beasts—savage, heartless, senseless; they are made for their own work, to kill without pity, to die without fear.'

The poor old slave, himself ignorant, and only lately a convert to the Christian faith, did not know how to answer his son's arguments. His first thought was to embrace his brave boy—his next to wring his hands in despair, and in the end all his broken voice could do was to give way to weeping.

'If,' resumed Lydon, 'if your God (you own but one ?) be indeed the kind and pitying Power you say He is, He will know that it was your acceptance of His faith which first prompted me to the decision which you disapprove.'

'How ? What do you mean ?' said the slave.

'Well, you know that I, sold as a slave in my childhood, was set free at Rome by my master, whom I had been fortunate enough to please. I hastened to Pompeii to see you—found you aged and infirm, and in the service of a rich and selfish master—you had lately embraced the new faith, and that made your duties more than ever painful to you. Did you not complain that you had to do certain things which you, as a Christian, considered to be wrong ? Did you not say that you felt guilty when you placed the offering before the household gods ? I wondered at it, but I did not understand your doubts, nor do I now, but I was your son, and my duty was to do what I could to relieve you of such service. Could I see your constant anguish and remain inactive ? No ! I had no money, it is true, but I had my youth and my strength. I could sell these for you ! So I found out the sum needed for your ransom, and I learned that the prize of a victorious gladiator would more than pay it. Thus I became a gladiator. I joined myself with those evil men, and learned their skill—that I might free my father !'

'Oh, that you could hear Olinthus,' sighed the old man, more and more overcome by the devotion of his son, but none the less convinced of the sinfulness of his proposal.

'I will hear the whole world talk if you like,' answered the gladiator, gaily, 'but not until you are free. Under your own roof, my father, you shall teach my dull brain all day long, ay, and all night too, if it will give you any pleasure. Oh ! such a delightful spot I have chosen for you, in the brightest part of the city, where you may sit in the sun before your own door, and pass your days in peace. Ah ! we shall be happy—and the prize can purchase it all. So cheer up, my father ! But I must be going—the trainer waits for me. Give me your blessing.'

Speaking thus, Lydon assisted his father down the steps to the road.

' Bless you ! bless you ! my brave boy ! ' said Medon, earnestly ; ' and may the great God reward the nobleness of your heart and forgive its error.'

The tall form of the gladiator passed swiftly down the path, the eyes of the old man following it until the last glimpse was gone ; and then, sinking on his seat, again he fastened his eyes on the ground.

' May I enter ? ' said a sweet voice. ' Is your mistress Julia within ? '

The slave motioned with his hand for the visitor to enter, but she who addressed him could not see the gesture, and repeated her question timidly, but in a somewhat louder voice.

' Have I not told you ? ' said the slave, fretfully. ' Enter.'

' Thanks,' said the speaker, sadly ; and the slave, roused by the tone, looked up and saw the blind flower-girl. His sorrow sympathized with her affliction, and he got up, took her kindly by the hand, and led her up the steps and into the house, where he handed her over to the charge of a female slave.

CHAPTER 16

Tells how Julia plotted against Ione.

THE fair Julia sat surrounded by her slaves in her private chamber—a small apartment opening on to the garden. But although small, the room was elegantly furnished ; the walls were decorated with brightly coloured frescoes, a carpet of Oriental design covered the floor, and the furniture was of the most dainty description. On the table before which Julia was seated stood a small circular mirror of the most highly polished steel, round which were arranged in precise order all those articles of the toilet, the perfumes, the ribbons, the jewels and the ornaments, with which she was accustomed to add to her natural attractiveness.

Clothed in a flowing robe of deep yellow, Julia reclined

lazily in her chair, while one of her slaves arranged her hair. When this had been done to her satisfaction, she put a pair of pearl ear-rings into her ears, a massive gold bracelet on each arm, a girdle of purple worked with gold thread round her waist, and a number of jewelled rings on her fingers.

Her toilet being now complete, Julia gazed once more in the mirror, and evidently satisfied with her appearance, she leaned back among her cushions, and bade the youngest of her slaves read to her from a scroll of poems on the table. This was proceeding when Nydia entered.

'I have obeyed your commands,' she said, as she drew near.

'You have done well, flower-girl,' answered the lady. 'You may take a seat.'

Julia looked hard at Nydia for a few moments, and then she motioned to her attendants to withdraw and to close the door. When they were alone, she said: 'You serve Ione?'

'I am with her at present,' was the reply.

'Is she as handsome as they say?'

'I do not know,' replied Nydia. 'How can I judge?'

'Ah! I should have remembered. But you have ears, if you cannot see. Do your fellow-slaves say she is handsome?'

'They tell me she is beautiful.'

'Do they say she is tall?'

'Yes.'

'Why, so am I. Dark-haired?'

'I have heard so.'

'So am I. And does Glaucus visit her much?'

'Daily,' replied Nydia, with a sigh.

'Daily, indeed! And does *he* think her handsome?'

'I should think so, since they are soon to be wedded.'

'Wedded!' exclaimed Julia, turning pale and starting from her seat. She remained silent for some time, and if Nydia could have seen, she would have realized how deep a wound her vanity had received.

'They tell me you are from Thessaly,' she said, at last—'the land of magic, of charms, and love-potions.'

'Thessaly is my native land,' said Nydia, timidly

'Do you, then, know of any love-charms?'

'I!' said the flower-girl, 'how should I? No, certainly not.'

'The worse for you, then; I would have given you gold enough to buy your freedom if you had been more wise.'

'But what,' asked Nydia, 'makes you ask this question? Have you not money, and youth, and beauty? Are they not love-charms enough without resorting to magic?'

'To all in the world but one person,' answered Julia, haughtily.

'And that one person?' said Nydia, eagerly.

'Is *not* Glaucus,' replied Julia, with ready deceit.

Nydia drew a deep breath of relief, and after a pause Julia went on:

'But talking of Glaucus and his attachment to Ione reminded me of love-spells. Nydia, I love—and shall I say it?—am not loved in return. My pride is wounded, and I would like to bring the ungrateful one to my feet. Hearing you were from Thessaly, I thought you might have learned some of the secrets of your country.'

'Alas, no!' murmured Nydia; 'I wish I had.'

'But tell me, Nydia—you hear all the gossip of slaves—have you ever heard of any Eastern magician in this city who possesses the art of which you are ignorant?'

'There is Arbaces, the Egyptian,' said Nydia, and she shuddered as she uttered the name.

'Arbaces! Ah, yes, why did I not think of him before?' said Julia; 'he is learned in all the mysteries of the stars, why not in the mysteries of love? But he is too wealthy to sell his art for money.'

'His is an evil mansion,' replied Nydia, 'and I have heard that he is stricken with sickness.'

'Never mind, I will seek and question him,' said Julia, excitedly, 'this very day, why not this very hour?'

'May I visit you afterwards to learn the result?' asked Nydia.

'Yes, certainly; come here to-morrow at this hour and you shall know all. I may have to employ you too; but

enough for the present. Stay, take this bracelet for the information you have given me ; remember, if you serve Julia, she is grateful and she is generous.'

'I cannot take your gift,' said Nydia, putting aside the bracelet, 'but I can sympathize with those who love—and love in vain.'

'So !' returned Julia, 'you speak like a free woman—and you shall yet be free—farewell.'

No sooner had Nydia departed, than Julia set out for the house of Arbaces. She found him seated on a balcony in his garden, his cheek pale and worn with the sufferings he had endured, although his iron frame was now recovering somewhat from the effects of his accident.

'Pardon me that I cannot rise,' he said, gazing on the stranger. 'I am still suffering from a recent illness.'

'Do not disturb yourself, O great Egyptian !' returned Julia, 'and pray forgive my intrusion. I seek the help of your great wisdom.'

'Draw near, fair stranger,' said Arbaces, 'and speak without fear or reserve. What, may I ask, brings you to my house ?'

'Your fame,' replied Julia.

'In what ?' he asked, with a faint smile.

'Can you ask, O wise Arbaces ? Is not your learning the common gossip of Pompeii ?'

'Some little knowledge I have, indeed, treasured up,' he said, 'but how can the secrets of my science help you ?'

'Alas !' said Julia, 'those whose love is unreturned are the victims of grief, and does not grief fly to wisdom for relief ?'

'Ha !' said Arbaces, 'can unrewarded love be the lot of one so fair ? If you but turn your face on the ungrateful one, no other love-charm will be necessary.'

'I did not seek your flattery,' responded Julia, 'but the love-charm of which you speak, it is that for which I came.'

'Fair stranger,' he said, with a scornful smile, 'love-spells are not among the secrets I have burnt the midnight oil to attain.'

'Is it indeed so? Then pardon me, great Arbaces, and farewell.' And she turned to depart.

'Stay,' exclaimed Arbaces, 'although I know nothing of the art of preparing potions and love-charms, yet I cannot see you go thus unsatisfied. If you will be candid with me, I may be able to help you with my advice. Tell me then, first, are you unmarried, as your dress suggests?'

'Yes,' said Julia.

'And having no fortune, you perhaps wish to marry some man of wealth?'

'No, I am richer than he who rejects me. I would like to see him my suitor, and her whom he prefers disappointed.'

'A very natural ambition,' said the Egyptian. 'Will you not tell me the name of him you admire! Surely no Pompeian youth can be blind to wealth and beauty.'

'He is an Athenian!' said Julia, looking down.

'Ha!' cried the Egyptian, as the whole matter became clear to him, 'there is but one young and noble Athenian in Pompeii. It is Glaucus of whom you speak.'

'Oh! do not betray me—he is indeed so called.'

Arbaces sank back. His mind was so filled with the new opportunities of revenge which were thus suddenly presented to him, that he gazed vacantly before him, and seemed almost to forget the presence of his visitor.

'I see you cannot help me,' said Julia, offended at his continued silence. 'At least keep my secret. Once more, farewell.'

'Maiden,' said Arbaces, 'forgive my apparent rudeness; your plea touched me—I will help you. I have not myself learned these lesser mysteries, but I know one who has. At the foot of Vesuvius, less than a league from the city, there dwells a famous witch. Go to her and mention the name of Arbaces: she will give you what you need.'

'Alas!' answered Julia, 'how am I to find the way to her abode? I cannot go alone.'

'In three days I myself shall be strong enough to accompany you,' said the Egyptian, rising and walking with feeble steps, 'but I fear I dare not yet venture.'

'But Glaucus is to wed Ione—early next month.'

'To wed Ione—and so soon ! Are you sure of this ?'

'Yes, I was told so by her own slave.'

'It shall not be,' exclaimed Arbaces—'fear nothing. Glaucus shall be yours. But how, when you get the potion, can you give it to him ?'

'My father has invited him, and Ione too, I believe, to a banquet the day after to-morrow. I shall then find an opportunity of administering it.'

'So be it !' said Arbaces, with fierce joy. 'I myself, ill or dying, will guide you to the witch. To-morrow evening when twilight falls meet me by the statue in the public gardens two miles along the road to Vesuvius.'

CHAPTER 17

Introduces the reader to the witch's cave.

WHILE Julia was plotting with Arbaces against the happiness of Glaucus and Ione, the two lovers, accompanied by a female slave, were enjoying a drive together in the cool air of the afternoon, the object of their excursion being the ruins of an ancient Greek temple about ten miles to the east of the city.

In due course they arrived at the ruins, and there they wandered for some time examining with interest and affection the remains of the temple, which still brought back memories of the past glories of their beloved Greece.

Returning homeward, they were more than usually silent, for a storm was rapidly creeping over them. The first warning of its approach was the low and distant rumble of thunder, but so suddenly do storms burst in that region that they had scarcely started before dark clouds overspread the sky and heavy drops of rain began to fall.

'Forward as fast as you can,' cried Glaucus to the driver ; 'the storm comes on apace.'

The man urged on the mules, and swiftly they went over the uneven road, but thicker grew the clouds, nearer broke the thunder, and faster fell the rain.

'Are you afraid?' whispered Glaucus to Ione.

'Not with you,' she replied.

At that instant the carriage, frail and ill-suited to the ruggedness of the road, struck violently into a deep rut, over which lay a log of wood; the driver, with a curse, urged the mules to clear the obstacle, but the force tore the wheel from the axle, and the carriage was overturned.

Glaucus was soon on his feet, and he hastened to assist Ione, who was fortunately unhurt. With some difficulty they raised the carriage, but they found it could no longer afford them shelter, for the springs which fastened the covering were snapped, and the rain was pouring into the interior.

What was to be done? They were yet some distance from the city, and no house, no aid seemed near.

'There is a smith about a mile off,' said the driver; 'he might at least fasten on the wheel.'

'Run to him,' said Glaucus; 'in the meantime we must find the best shelter we can.'

The lane was overshadowed with trees, and under the largest of them Glaucus drew Ione. He took off his own cloak to shield her from the rain, but it descended with such fury that it was soon dripping from the boughs overhead. Suddenly, there came a blinding flash of lightning, and as black darkness followed the flash, a mighty crash told them that a tree just near them had been struck. This incident warned them of the danger of their present shelter, and Glaucus began to look round for some less perilous place of refuge. Looking wistfully towards the mountain, he saw through the gloom a trembling light at no great distance.

'That must come from the hearth of some shepherd,' he said, and half-leading, half-carrying Ione, Glaucus and the slave made for the light. The rocks and vines, and above all the blinding rain, made progress very slow and difficult, and once the light disappeared, but it came again into view, and a fierce flash of lightning revealed a



GLAUCUS . . . DREW HER INTO THE CAVERN

cavern in the mouth of which they distinguished the dim outline of a human form. A little more climbing and struggling, and they reached what they had hoped would be a welcome place of refuge, but as they peered into the cave they shrank back with fear.

A fire burned at the far end, and over it was a small cauldron ; while on the sides of the cave there hung many rows of dried herbs and weeds. A fox which was crouching before the fire gazed upon the strangers, and growled ; in the centre was a strange statue, the three heads of which were formed by the skulls of a dog, a horse, and a boar, and before this wild image was a stand for offerings.

But it was none of these things which struck the visitors with fear as they gazed—it was the face of the inmate of the cave. Before the fire, with the light of a lamp shining full upon her, sat an old woman. Her features were hideous and revolting, her eyes were dull and stony, her cheeks wrinkled and hollow, and her hair straight and unkempt. All this, and the ghastly colour of her skin, gave her almost the appearance of a corpse.

‘It is a dead thing,’ said Glaucus.

‘No—it moves,’ whispered Ione, as she clung to the arm of the Athenian.

‘Let us go away !’ groaned the slave ; ‘it is the Witch of Vesuvius !’

‘Who are you ?’ said a hollow voice ; ‘what do you want here ?’

The awful voice would have made Ione turn and flee away, but Glaucus, though not without fear, drew her into the cavern.

‘We are wanderers from the city,’ he said, ‘and led by the light we have come to beg shelter from the storm.’

As he spoke the fox rose and advanced towards the strangers, showing his white teeth and uttering a deeper growl.

‘Down, slave !’ said the witch, and at the sound of her voice the beast dropped at once, and curled itself up on the ground, only keeping its watchful eye upon the intruders. ‘Come to the fire if you will,’ she said ; ‘I never welcome living thing, except the owl, the fox, the

toad, and the viper, so I cannot welcome you ; but come to the fire without welcome.'

The hag did not stir from her seat as she uttered these words, and they advanced towards the fire. Glaucus removed Ione's wet cloak, and seated her upon a log, their slave crept to the opposite corner of the hearth, while Glaucus blew with his breath the dull embers into a glowing flame.

'We disturb you, I fear,' said Ione.

The witch did not reply for a time, and then she said suddenly : 'Tell me, are you brother and sister ?'

'No,' said Ione.

'Are you married ?'

'Not so,' replied Glaucus.

'Ho, lovers ! ha !—ha !—ha !' and the witch laughed so loud and so long that the cavern rang with its echoes.

'Why do you laugh ?' said Glaucus, somewhat sternly.

'Did I laugh ?' said the witch, absently.

'She is in her dotage,' said Glaucus ; and as he uttered the words he saw the eye of the witch fixed upon him with a fierce stare.

'You lie,' she said, shortly.

'You are a very rude hostess,' replied Glaucus.

'Hush, do not provoke her,' said Ione.

'I will tell you why I laughed when I discovered you were lovers,' said the old woman. 'It was because it is a pleasure to the old and withered to look at young people like you, and to know that the time will come when you will hate each other—hate—hate—ha !—ha !—ha !'

'You utter but evil words,' said Glaucus ; 'and in future I will brave the storm rather than enter your abode.'

'You will do well, then. None should seek me save the wretched.'

'And why the wretched ?' asked Glaucus.

'I am the Witch of the Mountain,' she replied : 'for the love-sick I have potions, for the greedy I have promises of wealth, for the malicious, revenge ; for the happy and the good I have only curses ! Trouble me no more.' And with this she lapsed into silence.

Presently Glaucus observed the crested head of a large

snake issuing from under the seat of the witch. Whether it was the colour of Ione's cloak which roused its anger he could not tell, but the creature appeared to be preparing to spring upon her. Glaucus seized a half-burnt log from the fire, and this seemed to enrage the creature still more, for it raised itself until its height was nearly equal to that of the Greek himself.

'Witch!' exclaimed Glaucus, 'command this creature or you will see it dead,' but as he spoke the snake sprang upon him. Leaping lightly aside, Glaucus struck it a blow on the head, and it fell writhing among the embers of the fire.

The hag sprang up and looked at Glaucus with an expression furious beyond description. 'You have received shelter under my roof,' she said, 'and you have smitten the thing that loved me. I curse you! and you are cursed! May your love be blasted—may your heart wither—and may your last hour recall the words of the Witch of the Mountain! And you—' she added turning to Ione.

'Hag,' cried Glaucus, 'forbear! Me you have cursed and I defy you! But breathe one word against the maiden, and I will turn your curse into your dying groan. Beware!'

'I have done,' replied the hag, laughing wildly, 'for in your doom she who loves you is cursed too. I heard her breathe your name. *Glaucus*—you are doomed!' So saying she turned from them, and kneeling down began to examine the wounds of her favourite snake.

'Come, Ione,' said Glaucus, impatiently, 'who fears the ravings of an old woman in her dotage? Come!'

The youthful pair breathed more freely when they gained the open air, yet what they had seen and heard was so deeply impressed on their minds that they found it impossible to recover their usual spirits. With some difficulty they reached the road, where they found the carriage repaired, and the driver concerned at their long absence. They soon reached the gate of the city. As it opened to admit them, a litter carried by slaves was on its way out.

'It is too late to leave the city,' said the sentinel to the occupant of the litter.'

'Not so,' said a voice, at which both Glaucus and Ione started. 'I am going to call on a friend. I shall return shortly. I am Arbaces the Egyptian.'

'Arbaces at this hour, and still an invalid?' said Glaucus. 'Where can he be going?'

CHAPTER 18

Records a second interview in the witch's cave.

ARBACES had only waited for the storm to cease and for night to fall to set out for the cave of the Witch of the Mountain, and he soon arrived at the foot of a narrow path which Glaucus and Ione had not been fortunate enough to discover. Here he stopped, and bidding his slaves conceal themselves from the observation of any one who might happen to be passing, he started alone up the steep and narrow path, supporting his feeble steps by a long staff.

Having reached the mouth of the cavern, he paused to recover his breath, and then with his usual stately step he crossed the threshold.

The fox sprang up at the appearance of this new-comer, and by a long howl announced the visitor to its mistress.

'Down, slave!' said the witch as before to the fox; and, as before, the animal sank to the ground—silent, but watchful.

'Rise, servant of Darkness!' said Arbaces in a commanding tone; 'a master in your art salutes you—rise and welcome him.'

At these words the hag turned her gaze upon the Egyptian. She looked at him long and fixedly as he stood before her with folded arms and haughty brow. 'Who are you,' she said at last, 'who pretend to be greater in art than the Witch of Vesuvius?'

'I am he,' answered Arbaces, 'from whom all magi-

cians, from north to south, from east to west, have learned their art.'

'There is but one such man in these parts,' returned the witch; those who do not know his real name call him Arbaces the Egyptian, but to us of deeper knowledge he is known as the Lord of the Burning Girdle.'

'Look again,' said Arbaces; 'I am he.'

As he spoke he drew aside his outer robe, and revealed a girdle seemingly of fire that burned round his waist, fastened in the centre by a clasp which bore a strange sign. The witch rose hastily, and threw herself at the feet of Arbaces. 'I have seen then, she said, in a voice of deep humility, 'the Lord of the Burning Girdle—receive my homage.'

'Rise,' said the Egyptian, 'I have need of you.'

So saying, he seated himself on the same log of wood on which Ione had rested, and motioned to the witch to resume her seat.

'You are deeply skilled,' he began, 'in the secrets of the more deadly herbs; you know those which stop life, which burn the soul from the body. Speak, and speak truly.'

'Mighty Lord, such wisdom is indeed mine,' she replied.

'It is well,' he said, and then he went on—'there will come to you by to-morrow's starlight a vain maiden, who will ask of you a love-charm which shall secure for herself the love that he whom she admires now bestows upon another; instead of a love-potion, give the maiden one of your most powerful poisons.'

The witch trembled from head to foot. 'Oh, pardon me, dread master,' she said, 'but this I dare not do. The law is sharp and strict, and they will seize and slay me.'

'Of what use, then, are your herbs and potions, foolish woman,' said Arbaces. 'I command your obedience; it is for vengeance that I come to you. This youth for whom the potion is required has also crossed my path, in spite of my spells; I tell you Glaucus must die!'

'Glaucus did you say, mighty master?' said the witch, and her dull eyes glared as she uttered the name.

'Yes, so he is called; but what matters the name? Let him not be a living man three days from this date!'

'Listen to me,' said the witch: 'I am your slave, and am ready to do your bidding, but if I give the maiden that which will destroy the life of Glaucus, I shall certainly be detected, for the dead always find an avenger. Nay, more, if your visit to me be discovered you will have need of your deepest magic to protect yourself. But if instead of a poison which will destroy the life, I give a potion which will drive him mad who drinks it, will not your object be equally attained?'

'O wise woman!' said Arbaces, 'you shall have twenty years more of life for this—you shall not serve in vain the Master of the Flaming Girdle. And here, witch, is something that will help to make your dreary dwelling more comfortable.' So saying, he threw upon the ground a heavy purse which clinked musically to the ear of the hag, and passed out of the cave and down the path to his litter.

The witch watched him for some time as he retreated, until the darkness hid him from her view, and then she re-entered her abode, picked up the purse, took the lamp from its stand, and made her way to a dark passage at the far end of the cave. She went several yards down this gloomy path, and, lifting a stone, she put her treasure into a hole in the ground, which already contained a goodly collection of coins which she had received from time to time from her visitors.

'I love to look down at you,' she said, gazing at the money, 'and I am to have twenty years more of life to increase your store! O great Master!'

She replaced the stone, and continued her way along the passage for some paces, when she stopped before a deep, irregular crack in the earth. Here, as she bent down, strange rumbling noises were heard, while now and then volumes of dark smoke issued forth, and made their way into the cavern. Looking into the opening, she saw, far down, a long streak of intense red light. 'Strange!' she said, 'only within the last two days has that light been visible—what can it mean?'

The fox, which had followed its mistress, uttered a dismal howl, and ran back to the cave, and fear seized the hag herself as with tottering steps she left the weird

place, to begin to carry out the orders of the Egyptian. 'The youth called *me* a dotard,' she muttered, as she watched the steam curling up from the cauldron, 'but when,' she added with a savage grin, 'the young, the strong, and the beautiful are suddenly smitten with madness, ah, *that* is terrible. I cursed him, yes, and he shall be cursed !'

On that night, and at the very same hour which witnessed the dark and unholy interview between Arbaces and the witch, Apæcides was baptized.

CHAPTER 19

Shows how Julia's plans were thwarted by a rival.

'AND have you the courage to visit the Witch of Vesuvius this evening, and in the company of that dreadful man ?' said Nydia to Julia.

'Why, Nydia,' replied Julia, 'do you really think there is anything to fear ? These old hags are only deceivers, they have only learned to make their potions, and these they get from the herbs of the field. Why should I fear ?'

'But do you not fear your companion ?'

'What, Arbaces ? I found him a most courteous man.'

'Will you let me go with you, noble Julia ?' Nydia said at length.

'Why, yes,' returned Julia ; 'but how will you manage it ? We may not return until late, and you will be missed.'

'Ione is kind,' said Nydia. 'If you will let me sleep beneath your roof, I will say that an old friend has asked me to spend the day with her, and she will readily grant my request.'

'Do so, and in the meantime a bed shall be prepared for you in my own chamber.'

With that Nydia departed. As she was on her way to Ione, the chariot of Glaucus came along. He stopped for a moment to speak to the flower-girl.

'How is your fair mistress, my gentle Nydia ?' he said. 'She has recovered, I hope, from the effects of the storm ?'

'I have not seen her this morning,' answered Nydia, 'but—'.

'But what?'

'Do you think that Ione will permit me to pass the day with Julia, the daughter of Diomed? She wishes it, and she was kind to me when I had but few friends.'

'I am sure she will; I can answer for that,' said Glaucus.

'And may I stay for the night and return to-morrow?' she asked.

'As you please, Nydia. Present my dutiful regard to the fair Julia. Farewell.' He drove on, and Nydia retraced her steps to the house of Julia.

As the evening darkened, Julia, reclining in her litter, which was large enough to admit her blind companion also, took her way to the place of meeting appointed by Arbaces.

Dismissing her slaves, and avoiding the more public part of the garden, Julia, with Nydia, arrived at the statue where she was to meet Arbaces. 'I do not see the Egyptian,' said Julia, but as she spoke he appeared from the shade of some trees near-by.

'I greet you, fair maiden,' he said, 'but whom have you here? We must have no companions.'

'It is but the blind flower-girl,' replied Julia.

'Oh! Nydia!' said the Egyptian; 'I know her well,' and turning to her, added: 'You have been at my house, you know the oath—silence and secrecy now as then, or beware!'

Then drawing Julia aside he whispered: 'The witch does not care for many visitors at once; leave Nydia here till we return, she can be of no assistance to us.'

Julia was not, as we have already seen, easily frightened, and she readily agreed to let Nydia wait for her return; nor did Nydia ask to go with them, so she sat down while they went on their way.

Time passed but slowly, but at length she recognized the light step of Julia.

'Thanks to the gods,' were the first words of Julia, 'I have left that awful cavern, and have returned in safety. Come, Nydia, let us hasten home at once.'

It was not until they were seated in the litter that Julia spoke again. 'Such a sight!' she said, 'and such a hag! but let us not speak of it. However, I have got the potion, and she assures me of its effect. After he has drunk it I shall take the place of Ione in the affections of Glaucus.'

'Glaucus!' exclaimed Nydia, in the greatest surprise.

'Yes, I told you at first that it was *not* he; but I see now that I can fully trust you; it was for him that I required the potion.'

What were Nydia's thoughts when she made this discovery? She had assisted in tearing Glaucus from Ione, but only to transfer his affections to Julia. She was greatly agitated, although in the darkness her companion did not see her distress, but as they travelled rapidly along, this feeling gave place to another; a thought flashed across her mind; she was to sleep in Julia's apartment—she could obtain possession of the potion.

They arrived at the house of Diomed, and went at once to Julia's room, where a table was laid with refreshment, against their return. 'Drink, Nydia, you must be cold,' said Julia; 'as for me, my veins are like ice,' and they both partook heartily of the good things that had been provided.

'You have the potion,' said Nydia, after a while, 'let me hold it in my hands. How small the bottle is! What colour is the liquid?'

'Clear as crystal,' replied Julia; 'you could not tell it from water, and the witch assured me that it is tasteless; it is to be poured into any liquid, and Glaucus will only know what he has drunk by its effect.'

'How is it sealed?'

'Only by a little stopper—I withdraw it now, the liquid has no odour.'

'Is the effect instantaneous?'

'Usually—but it sometimes acts after a few hours.'

'How sweet is this perfume!' said Nydia, suddenly, taking up a small bottle from the table, and smelling its fragrant contents.

'Do you think so? The bottle is set with gems. You

would not take the bracelet I offered you yesterday ; will you accept the bottle ?'

Nydia bowed her gratitude, and placed the bottle in her vest.

Julia was now all animation and delight ; she laughed and talked on a hundred matters, and the night had far advanced before she thought about retiring to rest.

'I will not let this potion leave me until the time comes to use it,' she said ; 'it shall lie under my pillow, and give me happy dreams !' So saying she placed the bottle under her pillow. Nydia's heart beat violently.

'Fair Julia,' said the blind girl, 'I have to return very early, so Ione bids—I may have departed before you wake ; accept, therefore, my congratulations now.'

They retired to their couches, and Julia soon slept, but anxious thoughts occupied the mind of Nydia. She listened to the calm breathing of Julia ; and her ear, accustomed to be her guide in all things, soon told her that her companion was in a deep slumber.

She rose silently and poured the perfume which Julia had given her upon the marble floor, and washed the bottle carefully with water from the jug on the table. Then easily finding the bed of Julia (for to her, night was as day) she pressed her hand gently under the pillow and seized the potion. Julia did not stir, and Nydia rapidly transferred the charmed liquid to her scent-bottle, refilled the former bottle with water, which Julia had said the potion so much resembled, and replaced it under the pillow whence she had taken it. She then stole again to her couch and waited for the dawn. The sun rose—Julia still slept—Nydia noiselessly dressed herself, placed her treasure carefully in her vest, and departed.

The porter, Medon, saluted her kindly as she descended the steps to the street, but she heard him not ; her mind was too busy with plans as to how she could administer the potion, of which she had so successfully obtained possession, for her own ends—to Glaucus.

CHAPTER 20

Returns to Apæcides.

OUR story must now return to Apæcides, whom we left with the little band of Christians, of which by his baptism he had now become a full member. Apæcides possessed in no small degree those traits of character for which the early Christians were remarkable, and which undoubtedly accounted to a large extent for the rapid spread of the new faith, for it was the zeal and earnestness of the first converts, their utter disregard of danger and even of death, which won the admiration of the people, and excited a feeling of reverence for their religion. Olinthus was one of these bold and daring spirits, and his efforts were directed towards arousing the enthusiasm of Apæcides on behalf of the creed which he had adopted. He gave him to understand that, as a Christian, he could not possibly continue to wear the robes and outward marks of a priest of Isis, and more than this, he saw in the new disciple one who could denounce to the simple and misguided worshippers of Isis the fraud which was practised in the temple—indeed, he looked upon Apæcides as having been specially sent by God for this very purpose.

Apæcides still made his abode at the temple, and it was in the adjoining grove that Olinthus met him nightly under shadow of the darkness to instruct him in the Christian faith. It was on the day of the events recorded in the previous chapter that here, in the very grounds of the temple itself, Olinthus communicated his plan for the denunciation of Isis. 'At the next consultation of the oracle,' he said, 'advance to the railing, and proclaim aloud to the people the deceit they endure, and invite them to enter the temple and examine for themselves the artful mechanism by which the goddess is supposed to announce her will. Fear not—the Christians will be in the crowd, and we will urge them on to accept your challenge.'

Apæcides agreed to this proposal, and it was arranged that the bold stroke was to be made at a festival two

days afterwards, and in the meantime they should meet the next evening to settle finally all the details.

But it happened that this conversation had been overheard, and no sooner had the two retreating forms disappeared than the dark and ungainly figure of a priest emerged from behind the temple.

'So you intend to reveal our mysteries, and to-morrow night you meet here again ! I shall then learn more of your impudent plot, and I must confer at once with Arbaces. Your scheme will fail, clever as you think yourselves. Thus muttering, Calenus, for it was he, wrapped his robe more closely round him, and went thoughtfully home.

That night the sleep of Apæcides was broken and disturbed, for in the silence and darkness of his chamber the full meaning of the scheme of Olinthus became clear to him. To what a bold adventure he had pledged himself ! —to reveal the very mysteries in which he had taken part —to denounce the goddess whose robe he wore. If successful, what hatred and horror would be roused among the pious, and if unsuccessful what punishment might he not incur ? His friends—his sister—could he expect justice even from them ? They would regard his heroic act as madness. On the other hand, his courage, his virtue, and his honour combined to support him in his resolve. Thus the conflict in his heart was sharp and keen, but in the end his better feelings conquered, and he rose with his determination of the previous evening more firmly settled.

'You are late, Apæcides,' said a voice, as he left his chamber ; 'has the goddess appeared to you in a vision ?'

'If the goddess revealed her true self, Calenus, these altars would have no worshippers.'

'That may be true,' replied Calenus, 'but she is wise enough to commune only with priests.'

'A time may come when her secrets will be laid bare without her consent.'

'That is hardly likely,' returned Calenus ; 'she has triumphed for ages and will not fail now. These sayings of yours are very unwise.'

'You dare not say a word to disprove them,' said Apæcides.

'Nay, do not get angry ; I will not quarrel with you. Has not Arbaces taught us to dwell together in peace ? Has he not told us that we should deceive the people and enjoy ourselves ?'

'Yes, he has,' returned Apæcides ; ' nevertheless, beware of the hour when the deceit shall be exposed, and the true character of Isis made known.'

With these words he left the priest and departed. When, he had gone a few paces he turned to look back. Long and thoughtfully he gazed upon the temple—it was the last time it was ever beheld by him !

At last he turned and made his way slowly to the house of Ione ; for before he undertook the perilous adventure of the next day he was anxious to see his sister—his only relative.

He arrived at the house and found her in the garden with Nydia.

'My brother,' said Ione, joyfully, ' how eagerly I have wished to see you ! How unkind of you to answer none of my letters, to stay away from me so that I could not even thank you for my preservation. For at your last visit your strange manner prevented my speaking of it.'

'My dear Ione,' he replied, ' you owe me no thanks. Let us not speak of that wicked man—he is hateful to both of us. I may have an opportunity of teaching the world the true nature of his pretended wisdom. But let us sit down in the shade—for I am wearied with the heat of the sun.'

Beneath a wide-spreading tree, with the rich green grass under their feet, and a fountain playing before them, surrounded by bright sunny flowers, among which butterflies flitted happily—in this spot, and in this scene, the brother and sister sat together for the last time on earth.

'Ione, my sister,' said Apæcides, ' let me feel the cool touch of your hand upon my brow. Speak to me, too, for your voice is like music, but *do not bless me*. Do not utter a word of those things which in our childhood we were taught to consider sacred.'

'What, then, shall I say?' answered Ione. 'Shall I speak to you only of Isis?'

'That evil Spirit! No, rather be dumb for ever. But let us not argue now, let us avoid such thoughts. In your presence a calm comes over me; I feel as though we are children once more and that Heaven smiles equally upon us both. For if I escape—never mind what peril—if I be permitted to speak to you again, we will talk upon sacred subjects, and I cannot think you will close your ears to them. Do you remember how we plucked flowers and played together as children? Even so, hand in hand, shall we enter the Heavenly Garden!'

Wondering at words she did not understand, but moved even to tears at the sadness of their tone, Ione listened to her brother. 'Shall I sing to you a song of our childhood?' she said; 'both words and tune are fixed in my memory.'

He assented, and Ione, beckoning to a slave who stood at the other end of the garden, sent for her lute. She spent hours singing and talking to him, and the peace and restfulness of it all calmed his mind.

As he rose to go he said to her: 'Ione, if you should hear evil of me, would you believe it?'

'Never, my brother, never.'

'One question more. You are to be wedded to Glaucus—perhaps that marriage may separate us still more, but I do not wish to speak of that—tell me, do you love him?'

'Yes,' she murmured, 'I do.'

'Do you feel that for his sake you would give up everything, even incur the risk of death?'

'Yes, I would do this for Glaucus, and still feel it were not a sacrifice.'

'Enough! If a woman feel thus for the man she loves, can a man feel less devotion to his God?'

He said no more. His face was bright with divine light; his eyes glowed; he looked like a man who could dare to be noble. He turned to meet the eyes of Ione—earnest and tearful—he kissed her tenderly and in a moment more he had gone.

Long did Ione remain in the same place, silent and

thoughtful. Her maidens came again and again to remind her of her engagement to attend the banquet of Diomed. At length she got up and made her preparations, not with the pride of beauty, but sadly and listlessly. One thought alone made her willing to go at all—she would meet Glaucus there, and she could tell him of her alarm and uneasiness on account of her brother.

CHAPTER 21

Describes the banquet at the house of Diomed.

MEANWHILE Diomed was awaiting the arrival of his guests in the spacious gallery of his richly decorated villa. Sallust and Glaucus were the first to arrive, and as the merchant liked to be considered well-read, and a man of refined taste, he paid particular attention to Glaucus.

‘You see, my friend,’ he said, with a wave of his hand, ‘that we are somewhat classical here. The hall in which we shall dine is also borrowed from the Greeks. I am told, noble Sallust, that they have not this kind of apartment even in Rome.’

‘Oh!’ replied Sallust, with a half smile; ‘you Pompeians combine all that is best in Greece and Rome; may you combine the viands as well as you do the architecture!’

‘You shall see—you shall see, my Sallust,’ replied the merchant. ‘We of Pompeii have good taste, and we have also money.’

‘Two most excellent things,’ said Sallust. ‘But, look, here comes the lady Julia.’

An important difference in the customs of the Greeks and Romans was that among the former, ladies rarely or never took part in public entertainments of this kind, while with the latter they frequently attended the banquet; when, however, they were present it usually terminated at an early hour.

Magnificently robed in white, her dress interwoven with pearls and threads of gold, the handsome Julia entered the chamber.

Scarcely had she received the salutation of the two

guests, when Pansa and his wife, Lepidus, Clodius, and a Roman Senator entered almost at the same time ; then came the widow Fulvia ; then the poet Fulvius ; next a warrior from the neighbouring city of Herculaneum, and afterwards the less eminent of the guests. Ione yet tarried.

The guests moved about the apartment, and presently Glaucus found himself by a window overlooking the garden, with Julia by his side.

'Is it an Athenian custom, Glaucus,' said the merchant's daughter, 'to avoid those whom we once sought ?'

'Fair Julia—no !'

'Yet it seems to be one of the habits of Glaucus.'

'Glaucus never avoids a *friend* !' he replied, with some emphasis on the last word.

'May Julia rank among the number of his friends ?'

'It would be an honour for an emperor to include you among his friends.'

'You do not answer my question,' said Julia. 'But say, shall Julia be indeed your friend ?'

'If she will so favour me.'

'Yet even while you speak your eye is restless—you move away—you are impatient to join Ione.'

For at that moment Ione had entered and Glaucus had indeed observed her.

'Does my admiration of Ione make me unworthy of your friendship ?'

'Well, perhaps you are right—or I will try to think so. Glaucus,—yet one moment. You are to wed Ione ; is it not so ?'

'If the Fates permit, that is my hope.'

'Accept, then, from me, in token of our new friendship, a present for your bride. It is the custom of friends, you know, always to present to bride and bridegroom some little mark of esteem.'

'Julia, I cannot refuse a token of friendship from you. I will accept the gift as an omen of good fortune.'

'Then after the feast, when the guests retire, come to my room, that I may give it to you with my own hands. Remember !' And Julia joined the wife of Pansa, while Glaucus went to seek Ione.

A Pompeian dinner has already been witnessed at the house of Glaucus, so there is no need to repeat the details of the courses. The festive board consisted of three tables, one at the centre and one at each wing. The extreme corner of one of the wings was occupied by Julia, as the lady of the feast, and next to her was Diomed. At opposite corners of the central table were seated the Senator and Pansa, these being the positions of honour. The other guests were arranged so that the young people were near each other, and the more elderly also together. The seats of Ione and Glaucus were side by side.

The usual offering having been made to the household gods, slaves showered flowers upon the chairs and the floor, and crowned each guest with a garland of roses. Diomed then proceeded to appoint a director of the feast—an important office. He was not a little puzzled as to whom he should select. The Senator was too grave and infirm; Pansa was equal to the task, but to choose him would be an insult to the Senator. While considering the merits of the other guests his eye caught the mirthful glance of Sallust, and without further hesitation he named him director.

Sallust received the honour with due humility. 'I shall be a merciful king,' he said, 'to those who drink deep; let others beware!'

The slaves handed round basins of perfumed water, into which the guests dipped their fingers before the feast commenced, and then the tables were loaded with the first course.

The conversation was at first general, which allowed Ione and Glaucus to talk together in undertones, Julia watching them the while with keen and flashing eyes. 'How soon will her place be mine?' she was thinking.

The slaves, in the meantime, were kept busy by Sallust, who ordered one cup after another to be served round, and with such rapidity that it seemed as though he was determined to exhaust even the well-stocked wine-cellar of Diomed. The merchant began to repent his choice of director as he saw flagon after flagon brought into the room and its contents consumed.

At last the feast drew to a close; the dessert or last course was placed on the table; and the slaves again carried round their bowls of perfumed water for the use of the guests. At the same time a small circular table opened suddenly, as if by magic, and threw up a fine jet of fragrant water, which seemed to dissolve into mist over the table and the guests.

One form of amusement now followed another in unbroken succession, music and song being contributed by such of the guests as possessed the necessary talent, and at length the time of departure arrived, for the aged Senator was tired, and the warrior had a long journey back to Herculaneum. 'Tarry one moment, my friends,' said Diomed, 'you must take part in our concluding game.'

So saying, he whispered to a slave, who went out and presently returned with a bowl containing a number of sealed packets, exactly similar in appearance. Each guest was to purchase one of these at the price of the lowest piece of silver, the interest consisting in the inequality and often the unsuitability of the prizes. For instance, the poet drew a copy of his own poems, the warrior a case of needles, the widow Fulvia a drinking cup, and Julia a gentleman's buckle. The merriment was suddenly stopped by an accident which was regarded as an evil omen; Glaucus drew the most valuable of all the prizes, a small marble statue of the goddess Fortune, of Greek workmanship; on handing it to him the slave let it drop, and it broke into pieces.

Glaucus alone, although perhaps quite as superstitious as the others, seemed to be unmoved.

'I accept the omen,' he whispered tenderly to Ione, who had turned pale at the incident. 'It means that in giving you to me Fortune can give no more.'

In order to restore the gaiety of the company, Sallust called upon all present to drink the health of their host. This was followed by a similar compliment to the Emperor, and thus the party broke up.

Having seen Ione depart, Glaucus turned to the staircase which led down to Julia's apartment, and was conducted thither by a slave.

Glaucus,' she said, ' these pearls are the present I wish to give to your bride ; may the gods long give her health to wear them ! '

Thereupon she placed in his hands a case containing a row of pearls of some size and price. It was so much the custom for those about to be married to receive gifts that Glaucus readily accepted them, but at the same time he resolved to return the gift by one of thrice its value. Julia then poured some wine into a small bowl.

' You have drunk many toasts with my father,' she said, smiling, ' now drink one with me—health and fortune to your bride ! '

He took the cup, and custom required that he should drink the whole contents ; and he accordingly did so. Julia unaware of the deceit which Nydia had practised upon her, watched him with sparkling eyes ; the witch had told her the effect *might* not be immediate, yet she hoped it would not be long in taking effect. So she was disappointed when Glaucus set down the cup and continued to converse in the same tone as before. She detained him as long as she could, but no change took place in his manner.

' But to-morrow,' she thought, ' to-morrow, alas for Glaucus ! '

Alas for Glaucus, indeed !

CHAPTER 22

Relates how the potion was administered, and describes its effect.

WHEN Glaucus arrived at his own home, he found Nydia seated in his porch. She had gone there on the mere chance that he might return early, and was waiting anxiously for the earliest opportunity of administering the love-potion.

' Ho, Nydia,' he said, ' are you waiting for me ? '

' No,' she replied, ' I have been tending the flowers, and sat down for a while to rest myself.

' It is very warm,' said Glaucus, seating himself : ' will you tell one of the slaves to bring me a cooling drink ? '

Here, sudden and unexpected, was the very opportunity

for which Nydia waited. She breathed quickly—'I will myself prepare,' she said, 'the summer drink that Ione loves—of honey and weak wine cooled in snow.'

'Thank you,' said Glaucus; 'if Ione loves it, it must be delicious.'

Nydia withdrew for a few minutes, and then returned with the cup. Glaucus took it from her hand. What could not Nydia have given then for the power to see the effect of the potion. Leaning for support against the wall, her face pale and anxious, her trembling hands clasped together, she awaited the next words Glaucus would utter.

He raised the cup to his lips, and had drunk about a quarter of its contents, when he noticed the strange expression on the face of Nydia. He paused abruptly, and still holding the cup, he exclaimed:

'Why, Nydia, what is the matter? Are you ill or in pain? What ails my poor child?' As he spoke he put down the cup and rose from his seat, when a sudden pang shot to his heart, which was followed by a wild, confused, dizzy sensation in his brain. The floor seemed to glide from under him, and a mighty gladness seemed to take possession of him. He burst into a loud and thrilling laugh—he leaped aloft—and then as suddenly as it came this seizure passed partially away. He now felt his blood rushing madly through his veins. It throbbed in his ears and he felt it mount to his brow. Then a kind of darkness fell over his eyes—only semi-darkness, for through the shade he saw the opposite walls, and the figures painted on them seemed, ghost-like, to creep about. He was gliding on to madness—and he knew it not!

Nydia had not answered his first question—she had not been able to reply—but his wild and fearful laugh had roused her from her suspense; she could not see his fierce gestures, nor his reeling and unsteady steps; but she heard the words, broken and insane, which burst from his lips. She became terrified and appalled—she hastened to him, and falling on the ground she embraced his feet, weeping with terror.

'Glaucus! Glaucus!' she cried, 'speak to me—do you



HE RAISED THE CUP TO HIS LIPS

not know me?—rave not so wildly, or your words will kill me.'

A change now seemed to come over the disordered mind of the Athenian. He put his hand on Nydia's head, and looked wistfully into her face, and this seemed to bring back memories of Ione. With that remembrance his madness seemed to grow still more powerful, and he burst forth.

'By all the gods I swear that if I had now the world on my shoulders, I would let it fall for one smile from Ione. Ah, my beautiful one,' he added in plaintive tones, 'you love me not. You are unkind to me, you forsake me. *You* should not desert me, for our forefathers were Greek. Ho! dark form, why do you rise like a cloud between me and mine? I know you! Your name is Arbaces. Fly, dark shadow, you cannot harm us!'

'Glaucus! Glaucus!' murmured Nydia, and in her remorse and anguish she fell senseless on the floor.

'Who calls?' said he in a loud voice. 'Ione, it is she! They have carried her away—but we will save her—where is my pen? Ha, I have it. I come, Ione, to your rescue: I come! I come!'

So saying, he bounded through the house, and rushed swiftly down the starlit streets, muttering to himself as he went. A reeling man was no unusual sight at evening in the streets of Pompeii, and the passers-by smiled as they made way for him, but those who looked a second time at his face started in a nameless terror, and the smile departed from their lips. He passed through the more populous streets, and making his way by mere force of habit towards the house of Ione, he entered the lonely grove in which Apæcides had held his interview with Olinthus. What happened there must be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER 23

Shows how Arbaces removed an enemy from his path.

IMPATIENT to learn whether the potion had been administered to Glaucus, and with what effect, Arbaces resolved,

as the evening came on, to see Julia and relieve his anxiety. It was usual for men at that time to carry about with them waxen writing tablets and a pen attached to their girdle, and with the girdle they were put off at home. In fact, under the appearance of a writing instrument or "stilus," the Romans carried about with them a very sharp and dangerous weapon. Taking, then, his girdle and his cloak, and a staff to assist his still somewhat feeble steps, Arbaces started out for the villa of Diomed.

About the same time, with swift and stealthy steps, Calenus entered the grove in which Apæcides and Olinthus had arranged to complete the plans they had secretly made the day before. Gently pushing back the bushes which surrounded the temple, Calenus settled himself in his hiding-place, a hiding-place so effective that no passer-by could possibly have detected him. Presently the solitude of the grove was disturbed by the approach of Arbaces on his way to the house of Diomed; and at the same instant Apæcides appeared from the opposite direction to keep his appointment with Olinthus.

'Ah! Apæcides,' said Arbaces, recognizing the priest at a glance; 'when last we met you were my enemy. I have often wished since then to see you, I would still have you as a pupil and a friend.'

Apæcides started at the voice of the Egyptian, and halting abruptly, he gazed upon him with scorn and anger.

'Villian and impostor!' he said at length, 'so you have recovered from the jaws of the grave! Do not think to ensnare me again; I am armed against you.'

'Hush!' said Arbaces, 'speak lower, you may be overheard; if other ears have heard your words—why—'

'Do you threaten me? I care not if the whole city has heard me.'

'Such words I ought not to forgive. But pause and hear me. You are angry with me for your sister's sake. You are right, and bitterly I have repented of my folly. Forgive me! I, who never asked pardon of any living man, beg you now to forgive me. Listen; I make amends for my mistake—I ask for your sister in marriage. Nay, do not start, but consider—what is an alliance with the

gay Glaucus compared to an alliance with me. I have wealth, birth, wisdom—but all that you know. Only give your consent to our marriage, and my whole life shall atone for my error.'

'Egyptian,' replied Apæcides, 'even if I were to consent, my sister hates you; but I have my own wrongs to consider. Tremble then—for even now I am awaiting the hour in which you and your false gods shall be revealed in their true light.'

The Egyptian's face grew pale. He looked behind, before, around, to make sure that no one was near, then he fixed his dark eye on the Christian with such a gaze of wrath that only one supported by divine zeal could have faced it.

'Apæcides,' said the Egyptian in a trembling voice, 'beware! What is it you intend to do? Think well before you reply. Do you speak in haste or from some fixed purpose?'

'I speak by the inspiration of the True God, whose servant now I am,' answered the Christian boldly. 'Before three days have passed you will know all! False impostor, tremble, and farewell.'

Fierce wrath filled the breast of Arbaces. Rapidly one thought followed another; Apæcides opposed his marriage with Ione, he threatened to reveal his deceit and his vice. His love, his reputation, even his very life might be in danger. He knew by his words that Apæcides had adopted the Christian faith, and he knew full well the courage and the zeal of the followers of that creed. He cast another hasty glance around him—no one was near—he grasped his stilus.

'Die then, in your rashness!' he muttered, and raising his hand high over the left shoulder of Apæcides as he turned away, he plunged the sharp weapon twice into his breast.

Apæcides fell to the ground pierced to the heart—he fell without a groan, under the very wall of the temple.

Arbaces gazed for a moment upon his fallen foe with the fierce joy of conquest, but the sense of his danger soon flashed upon him; he wiped his stilus carefully on the

long grass, and even on the garments of the dead man ; he drew his cloak about him, and was just about to hasten away, when he saw, coming up the path, the figure of a young man, whose steps reeled strangely as he advanced. The quiet moonlight shone upon his face, and the Egyptian recognized another enemy—Glaucus. The unfortunate Greek was chanting a mad song, made up of lines from hymns and odes, all weirdly woven together.

‘Ha!’ thought the Egyptian, instantly realizing his state and the cause, ‘so the potion works and fate has sent you here, so that I may crush two of my foes at once.’

Quickly he concealed himself among the bushes growing at the side of the temple, and from his hiding-place watched the advance of his second victim. He saw that Glaucus was utterly deprived of reason ; nevertheless, as he came to the dead body of Apæcides he stopped, placed his hand to his brow as if to collect his wandering senses, and said :

‘What ho ! Who is this that sleeps so soundly ? It is time to wake,’ and stooping down he attempted to lift the body.

Forgetting his weakness, the Egyptian sprang from his hiding-place, and as the Greek bent, he struck him forcibly to the ground, right over the body of the Christian ; then, raising his powerful voice, he shouted :

‘Ho, citizens ! help—a murder—a murder under the very walls of your temple ! Help, before the murderer escapes !’ As he spoke, he placed his foot upon the breast of Glaucus, a quite unnecessary precaution, as the potion together with the blow rendered him motionless and insensible. Looking down, Arbaces observed the stilus of Glaucus in his girdle, and hastily seizing it he dipped it in the blood of the murdered man, and laid it beside the corpse.

And now, fast and breathless, several citizens came running to the spot. ‘Lift up the corpse,’ said the Egyptian, ‘and guard well the murderer.’

They raised the body, and great was their horror to find it clothed in the robes of a priest of Isis ; but still greater was their surprise when they found the person accused of the crime was the admired Athenian.

A centurion now thrust himself into the crowd, with an air of some importance.

'What! a murder? Who has committed the crime?'

The bystanders pointed to Glaucus.

'He! he looks rather like the victim. Who accuses him?'

'I,' said Arbaces, drawing himself up proudly, and the jewels on his robe instantly convinced the officer of the witness's respectability.

'Pardon me—your name?' said he.

'Arbaces; it is well enough known in Pompeii. Passing through the grove I saw the Greek and the priest in earnest conversation. I was struck by the reeling movements of the former, his violent gestures, and his loud voice; he seemed to be either drunk or mad. Suddenly I saw him raise his stilus—I darted forward—but I was too late to prevent the blow. He had twice stabbed his victim, and was bending over him, when in my indignation I struck the murderer to the ground. He fell without a struggle, which makes me more inclined to think he was not altogether in his senses when he committed the deed; for, as I have only just recovered from a severe illness, my blow was feeble, and Glaucus is young and strong.'

'His eyes are open now—his lips move,' said the officer. 'Speak, prisoner—what do you say to the charge?'

'The charge—ha—ha! Why, it was merrily done; when the old witch set her serpent at me, what could I do? But I am ill—I faint—the serpent has bitten me. Carry me to bed, and call the physician.' And with a heavy groan Glaucus fell back into the arms of the bystanders.

'He is mad,' said the officer, kindly, 'and in his madness he has struck the priest. Has any one seen him to-day?'

'I saw him this morning,' said one; 'he passed my shop and spoke to me. He then seemed to be as well as the best of us.'

'And I saw him half an hour ago,' said another, 'passing along the street with strange gestures, and muttering to himself, just as the Egyptian has described.'

'That supports the evidence of Arbaces,' said the centurion; 'it must be true. At all events, he must be taken before the magistrate—a sad pity, he is so young and so rich!'

'Bring some planks or a litter to bear the dead body,' said Arbaces; 'a priest of Isis must not be carried to his temple by vulgar hands, like a butchered gladiator.'

Just at this moment the crowd parted, as Olinthus forced his way through. His eyes at first rested on the upturned face of Apæcides, on which the agony of a violent death still lingered. He turned his head, and his eyes fell full upon the Egyptian.

'Murder has been done here,' he said; 'where is the murderer? Stand forth, Egyptian! For, as the Lord liveth, I believe *thou* art the man!'

An anxious change passed for one brief moment over the dark features of Arbaces, but it gave way instantly to an expression of indignation. 'I know,' he said, 'who is my accuser, and I can guess why he charges me. Men of Pompeii, this man is one of the most bitter of the Christians. Is it any wonder that he dares to accuse an Egyptian with the murder of a priest of Egypt?'

'We know him,' shouted several voices. 'It is Olinthus the Christian—or rather the atheist—he denies the gods!'

'Peace, brethren,' said Olinthus with dignity, 'and hear me. This murdered man before his death embraced the Christian faith—he revealed to me the dark sins and sorceries of yonder Egyptian—the deceits of the temple of Isis. He was about to declare them publicly. He, a stranger, without enemies; who would shed his blood, but one afraid of his witness? And who would fear his testimony the most?—Arbaces, the Egyptian!'

The centurion pressed forward again. 'Have you, Olinthus, or whatever your name may be, any proof of the charge you have made against Arbaces, or is it mere suspicion?'

Olinthus remained silent, while the Egyptian laughed with disdain.

'Do you claim the body of this priest of Isis as one of the Christian sect?'

'I do.'

'Swear then by yonder temple, and by the statue therein that the dead man embraced your faith.'

'I disown your idols, and I abhor your temple. How

can I swear by them? O vain and blind!' continued the Christian, raising his voice: 'how can you believe in yonder image? Has it eyes to see, or ears to hear, or hands to help you? Is a mute thing carved by man's art a goddess? Did it make mankind? By mankind it was made. Convince yourself of your folly.'

And as he spoke he strode across to the temple, and before any of the bystanders were aware of his purpose, he had struck the statue from its pedestal. 'See!' he cried, 'your goddess cannot even defend herself. Is this a thing to worship?'

He was not permitted to say more. So daring an outrage in one of their most sacred places of worship filled every one with horror. The crowd rushed upon him and seized him, and but for the interference of the centurion, they would have torn him to pieces.

'Peace!' said the officer, 'such impious deeds must be referred to the proper authority. Let both culprits be taken before the magistrate; place the body of the priest on the litter, and carry it to his home.'

At that moment a priest of Isis stepped forward. 'I claim this body,' he said, 'according to the custom of the priesthood.'

'Let the priest be obeyed,' said the centurion.

Arbaces turned, and met the glance of the priest of Isis—it was Calenus; and there was something so subtle in that glance, that the Egyptian muttered to himself—'Could he have witnessed the deed?'

CHAPTER 24

Accompanies Ione to and from the funeral of her brother.

MEANWHILE sorrow and death were in the house of Ione, for it was the night preceding the funeral of Apæcides, whose body had, according to custom, been removed from the temple to the house of his nearest relative.

Ione had heard in one breath of the death of her brother and the charge against Glaucus. Her great sorrow had prevented her from inquiring into the circumstances

surrounding her beloved, so that his illness, his madness, and the approaching trial were all unknown to her. She had merely heard the accusation against him, and had at once rejected it; nay, on hearing that Arbaces was his accuser, she believed firmly that he was the criminal. But the arrangements for the funeral occupied her attention for the present, and in these, in lamentation and in prayer, Ione forgot herself.

It was a beautiful custom of the time to bury the young in the early morning twilight, and the stars had only just begun to fade when a silent group stood motionless before Ione's door. Slender torches shed their light over the sad faces of the mourners, and plaintive music echoed along the desolate street as the voices of the assembled group sang the funeral hymn.

As the hymn died away, the mourners divided; and borne upon a couch, spread with a purple pall, the body of Apæcides was carried forth. Now the procession started. First went the musicians, playing a slow march; next followed the hired mourners, chanting a funeral dirge; then came the priests of Isis, barefooted and in snowy robes, each carrying a small sheaf of corn; immediately behind the bier, among her women, followed the sole surviving relative—Ione—her head bare, her face composed and still, save when, as some tender thought swept over her, she covered her face with her hands and wept silently.

And so the procession moved along, till it had passed through the city gate and had reached the Place of Tombs, which the visitor may yet behold.

The bier was placed on the funeral pile, and the attendants parted on either side, as Ione moved forward and stood for some moments in silence. Then her pent-up grief broke forth, and she cried aloud in her agony—'Oh! my brother! my brother! Your gentle heart could not provoke an enemy! You are not dead—you are asleep. Awake!'

The sound of her grief-stricken voice roused the sympathy of the mourners, and they broke out into renewed lamentation. The voices seemed to startle Ione, and to make her aware that she was not alone. Her features once

more composed and calm, she received from a priest the funeral torch, and with a trembling hand she ignited the funeral pile. The music rose again, but Ione heard it not, nor did she see the flames which leaped up towards the dawning sky. She sat apart and alone, her face supported on her hands ; she felt only the sense of her unutterable loneliness.

The last sparks were extinguished by the attendants, and the ashes were collected. Steeped in the rarest wine and the costliest perfumes, the remains were placed in a silver urn, which was solemnly stored in one of the neighbouring sepulchres. And the sepulchre was covered with flowers and garlands, and hung around with many lamps.

While some stayed behind to share with the priests the funeral banquet, Ione and her handmaids took homeward their melancholy way. And now, the last rite to her brother performed, her mind awoke, and she thought of Glaucus and the fearful charge against him. Questioning her maidens, who had hitherto refrained from adding to her sorrow by informing her of his state, she learned that he had been dangerously ill, that he was a prisoner, and that the day of his trial was appointed.

'And I have been so long forgetful of him,' she exclaimed ; ' let me hasten to show that I, the nearest relative of the dead, believe him innocent of the charge ; and if they will not believe me, if they sentence him to exile or to death, let me share the sentence with him ! '

She hastened her pace, scarcely knowing where she went. Should she go to the magistrate ? or should she seek Glaucus ? She hurried on—she was now in the long street leading up to the city. The houses were open, but their inmates were not yet abroad—the only persons visible were a small group of men standing by a covered litter. As Ione passed them, a tall figure stepped forward, and she shrieked aloud as her eyes fell upon Arbaces.

' Fair Ione,' he said gently, appearing not to notice her alarm, ' forgive me if I intrude upon your sorrow, but the magistrate, sympathizing with your unprotected and friendless condition, and thinking it hard for you to act unguided and to mourn alone, has very wisely entrusted

you to the care of your lawful guardian. See, here is the writing which gives you into my charge.'

'Dark Egyptian!' cried Ione, drawing herself proudly aside, 'begone! It is you who have slain my brother! Will they entrust his sister to your care? Ah! you turn pale! Pass on, and leave me to my woe.'

'Your sorrow takes away your reason, Ione,' said Arbaces, vainly attempting his usual calmness. 'I forgive your words. You will find me, now as ever, your best friend. But the public street is not the place for this conversation. Come, the litter is ready.'

The terrified attendants gathered round Ione. 'Arbaces,' said the eldest of them, 'this is surely not the law. The law says that for nine days after the funeral the bereaved relatives are not to be disturbed.'

'Woman!' returned Arbaces, 'to place a ward under the charge of her legal guardian is contrary to no law. I tell you I have the decree of the magistrate. This delay is unseemly; place her in the litter.'

So saying he stepped forward to seize Ione. She drew back, gazed fiercely into his face, and then burst into delirious laughter.

'Ha, ha, ha! this is well! excellent guardian! Ha! ha, ha!' And startled by the sound of her own mad laugh she sank senseless upon the ground. . . . A minute more, and Arbaces had placed her in the litter. The bearers moved swiftly away, and the unfortunate Ione was soon borne from the sight of her weeping maidens.

CHAPTER 25

Relates further measures taken by Arbaces to secure his own safety.

PENDING his trial, Glaucus was lodged in the house of Sallust, who had acted the part of a friend, and had become his surety, accepting responsibility for his good behaviour and for his regular appearance before his judges, until the verdict should be pronounced. To the house of Sallust, then, Arbaces made his way one evening in order to persuade Glaucus, if possible, to make a confession of the crime charged against him.

Arbaces knew that the events of that fateful night were a blank to the mind of the young Athenian, and he half hoped to secure his own safety by obtaining from Glaucus a written acknowledgment of the crime in return for a promise of assistance at the trial. But he did not know the true character of his victim, or he would have saved himself the trouble of a visit. Ill as he was, Glaucus refused even to listen to the proposal of his enemy, and Arbaces left the house defeated in his purpose and annoyed at his failure.

As he passed into the street, he found Nydia sitting before the door, waiting for any news of her friend which she might be able to gather from visitors.

'What are you doing here at this late hour?' he said to the blind girl.

'I know you,' said Nydia; 'you are Arbaces the Egyptian'; and she flung herself at his feet. 'Oh, save him! He is not guilty—it is I who am the cause of all his trouble. Oh, heal him! You know some herb, some charm—it is a potion that has caused his sickness.'

'Hush, child! I know all. Follow me home; I wish to speak to you—for his sake I ask it; he may yet be saved.' And as she rose to follow him, he muttered, 'I must secure this girl, lest she give evidence about the potion.'

Arrived at his house, Arbaces learned that it was her hand and not Julia's which had given Glaucus the deadly draught. The wretched girl made this confession in the hope that Arbaces would help her, for in her ignorance she thought the magician could both restore the health and save the life of her friend. He, however, had no intention of helping her; he only wondered how he could keep her a prisoner until the fate of Glaucus had been decided.

'Child,' he said, ignoring her prayer for help, 'you must stay here; it is not fitting that you should wander about the streets, or be thrust from the door of Sallust's house by the rude feet of his slaves. Wait here for some days, and Glaucus shall be restored.' So saying, and without waiting for her reply, he left the room, drew the bolt across the door, and committed the care of his prisoner

to the slave who had charge of that part of the house. Then, alone with his evil thoughts, he waited for the morning light, and with the break of dawn he set out, as we have seen, to secure possession of the person of Ione.

His object in seizing her was to prevent her from taking an active interest in the trial, and also to guard against her accusing him of his deceit and violence towards her on a former occasion. It was not until he met her after the funeral that her significant words revealed another danger—her suspicion of his part in the crime. So he flattered himself that in making her a prisoner he had made his own position safe.

At the same time his mind was uneasy. He longed to get right away from the scene of his crime, and having Ione now in his possession, he secretly determined that as soon as he had seen the end of his rival, he would transport his wealth—and Ione—to some distant shore. 'Yes,' said he, striding to and fro in his solitary chamber, 'the law which gives me the charge of my ward gives me also my bride. Far across the sea will we go, and there in some new land—who knows?—I may found an empire, and establish anew my ancient creed.'

From these day-dreams Arbaces was awakened to attend the trial. The pale worn cheek of Glaucus touched him less than his pride and his courage; for Arbaces was one who had little pity for what was unfortunate, while he had great sympathy with what was brave. Had he but obtained from Glaucus a written confession of the crime, and so saved himself from every possible chance of detection, the Egyptian would have strained every nerve to save his rival. Even now his hatred was over, and he wished to crush his victim only because he was an obstacle in the way of his ambition. So while he gave his evidence with apparent unwillingness and compassion, he secretly, by the help of his priests, roused that popular indignation against Glaucus which carried so much weight with the court.

Arbaces had not neglected to call on Julia and to relate to her the confession of Nydia; her relief was great when she learned that, after all, she had taken no direct part

in the unhappy business. She had loved the fame and the prosperity of Glaucus far more than Glaucus himself, and she now felt that if he could not be her admirer, neither could he marry Ione ; she was almost glad at the thought. Fickle as she was, she began to favour the sudden and earnest suit of Clodius, and she was not likely to risk the chance of an alliance with that high-born noble by revealing what she had done to try to gain the affection of another. Altogether the way of Arbaces seemed fair and smooth—that of Glaucus gloomy and hard.

CHAPTER 26

Records two conversations.

WHEN Nydia found that Arbaces did not return, and that hour after hour passed by in solitude and suspense, she began to feel round her prison for some avenue of escape ; and finding the only door barred she called aloud in rage and agony.

‘Ho, girl!’ said the slave, opening the door, ‘what means all this noise?’

‘Where is your master?’ she cried ; ‘why am I imprisoned here? Let me go forth!’

‘Alas, little one,’ he replied, ‘have you not seen enough of Arbaces to know that his will is law? You cannot have your liberty, but you can have much better things—food and wine.’

‘But why am I imprisoned?’ she said. ‘What can the great Arbaces want with a poor thing like me?’

‘That I know not, unless it be to attend on your new mistress, who was brought here to-day.’

‘What! Ione here?’

‘Yes, poor lady ; she liked it little. She is his ward, you know.’

‘Oh! take me to her.’

‘She is ill—frantic with rage. Besides, I have no orders to do so.’

‘But what harm is there in seeing Ione?’

‘I cannot say ; but if you want company, I am willing

to talk to you, little one, for I am lonely enough in my dull cell. By the way, you are from Thessaly—perhaps you know how to tell fortunes.'

'Silence, slave, or if you wish to talk, tell me what you have heard about Glaucus.'

'Why, my master has gone to his trial. Glaucus will suffer for it.'

'For what?'

'For the murder of the priest Apæcides.'

'Ah!' said Nydia, 'I have heard something of this, but I do not understand it. Yet who will dare to harm him?'

'Why, the lion or the tiger, if he be found guilty.'

Nydia sprang up as if she had been shot; she uttered a scream, and then falling at the feet of the slave she said, 'Tell me you are jesting—speak!'

'I know nothing of the law,' he said; 'it may not be as bad as I say. But Arbaces is his accuser, and the people want a victim for the arena.'

When he had left the room, Nydia began to collect her thoughts. Arbaces was the accuser of Glaucus; Arbaces had imprisoned her there; that was a proof that she could help Glaucus. Oh! how she longed for liberty. But how could she gain it? Only one way was open to her—she must work upon her keeper. He had spoken to her of magic and fortune-telling, and she resolved to use his superstition as a means of attempting to escape, so when Sosia the slave came next morning, she led the conversation towards the topic which he had himself introduced the day before.

She was aware that her only chance of escape was at night, so she said, 'The night is the only time in which we can consult the Fates—you must come to me then. But what do you wish to know?'

'As for that,' he replied, 'I should like to be as wise as my master; but that cannot be. Let me know at least whether I shall ever save enough to purchase my freedom, or whether the Egyptian will give it me for nothing.'

'Well, there are various ways of satisfying you, but the simplest is, I think, by the Magic of Air.'

'I trust,' said Sosia, 'there is nothing very frightful in the operation? I have no love for ghosts and apparitions.'

'Fear not; you will see nothing; you will only hear the bubbling of water. First, then, be sure that to-night you leave the garden gate open, so that the spirit may feel himself invited to enter; and place fruits and water near the gate as a sign of hospitality; then, three hours after twilight, come here with a bowl of the coldest and purest water, and you shall learn all. But do not forget the garden gate—everything depends upon that.'

He promised to carry out her instructions, and departed, bolting the door behind him.

Night set in, and the time drew near for Sosia to learn his fate, when there entered at the very gate he had left open—not a spirit—but the very human form of Calenus. He scarcely noticed the indifferent fruit and the more indifferent wine which were set there, but made his way straight to the house. 'I have the Egyptian's life in my power,' he said; 'I wonder what he will value it at!'

At the other end of the open court he suddenly encountered Arbaces. 'Ho! Calenus—do you seek me?' asked the Egyptian, somewhat embarrassed.

'Yes; shall we retire to your chamber?'

'As you will; but the night is clear and balmy, and we are alone in the garden; let us sit here. On a lovely night like this one may feel the joy of living.'

'You may say that,' returned Calenus, seeking an opportunity to introduce the subject which had brought him there—'you may say that. You have countless wealth, inexhaustible pleasure—and even at this hour triumphant revenge.'

'You refer to the Athenian. Ay, to-morrow the sentence of his death will be given. But you make a mistake; his death only removes a rival. I entertain no feeling of revenge against the murderer.'

'Murderer! repeated Calenus, slowly and meaningly; and pausing a moment he fixed his eyes upon Arbaces. 'Murderer! you do not charge him with that crime? You, of all men, know he is innocent.'

'Explain yourself,' said Arbaces, coldly ; for his suspicions had prepared him for what he had heard.

'Arbaces,' whispered Calenus, 'I was in the grove, hidden among the bushes. I overheard—I saw everything. I saw your weapon strike Apæcides.'

'You saw it all,' said Arbaces, calmly ; 'so I imagined—you were alone?'

'Quite alone,' replied Calenus, surprised at the cool manner of the Egyptian.

'And why were you hidden there at that hour?'

'Because I knew that Apæcides was to meet Olinthus there to discuss a plot against our goddess. I was there to detect them.'

'Have you told any one what you saw?'

'No, my master ; the secret is locked in my breast.'

'And why have you not told me this before? And why, having waited so long, do you tell me now?'

'Because—because—' began Calenus, in confusion.

'Because,' interrupted Arbaces, with a smile—'because, Calenus, you wished me to be thoroughly entangled in the trial that I might have no chance of escape ; that I might commit myself to perjury, as well as homicide ; that having roused the expectations of the populace, nothing could prevent me from becoming their victim ; and you tell me the secret now, so as to increase the price of your silence. Is it not so?'

'Arbaces,' replied Calenus, 'truly you are a Magician ; you read the heart as if it were a book.'

'It is my vocation,' answered the Egyptian. 'Well, then, keep the secret ; and when all is over I will make you rich.'

'Pardon me,' said the priest, who placed no trust in a future chance of generosity. 'If you would have me silent, you must pay something in advance.'

'What, can you not wait until to-morrow?'

'But why delay? Perhaps when the innocent has suffered, and I cannot for shame give my testimony, you will forget my claim.'

'Well then, Calenus, what would you have me pay you?'

'Your life is very precious, and your wealth is very great,' replied the priest, with a grin. 'You can easily spare enough to make me the richest priest in Pompeii, and not miss your loss.'

'Come, Calenus,' said Arbaces, 'you are an old friend and a faithful servant. You shall descend to my treasury, and you shall bear away as much as you can conceal beneath your robes. Then when Glaucus is no more, you shall pay the treasury another visit. Do I speak as a friend?'

'Oh, greatest and best of men,' said Calenus, almost weeping with joy, 'can you forgive my doubts of your justice and generosity?'

CHAPTER 27

Shows how two schemes were frustrated.

PUNCTUALLY at the time arranged, Sosia came to Nydia's chamber bearing the bowl of water which he believed would communicate to him his fate.

'Have you carried out my instructions?' asked the blind girl; 'is the garden gate open?'

'It is,' replied the slave, 'and on a table by the gate I have placed fruit and nuts and wine.'

'That is well; now open this door a little, and give me the lamp.'

The slave obeyed; and Nydia, after bending silently over the lamp for some moments, rose, and in a low voice sang a weird strain, of which Sosia could not understand a word.

The song finished, she turned to her companion and said, 'Place the bowl of water on the ground. Now give me your handkerchief that I may bind it over your eyes; there—can you see?'

'See! No! nothing but darkness!'

'Well, now you can ask what you wish to know, speak softly, and repeat your question three times. If the answer is in the affirmative you will hear the water bubble; if in the negative, the water will be quite silent.'

The slave began. 'O Spirit,' he said, 'listen and hear me. Shall I be able to purchase my freedom in a year?' He listened, did the water bubble? No, all was as still as the grave. 'Well, then if not this year, in two years?' The water was still silent. 'Two years and a half—three—four?' Still no sound was heard. 'Five—six—sixty years? May the evil spirit seize you. I will ask no more!' And Sosia, in a rage, kicked over the bowl of water, tore the bandage from his eyes, and discovered—that he was in the dark!

'What, ho! Nydia; the lamp has gone. Ah, traitress! and you have gone too; but I'll catch you—you shall smart for this!' He groped his way to the door, only to find it bolted from outside and himself a prisoner instead of Nydia. What could he do? He dared not shout nor knock lest Arbaces should hear him; and the girl meanwhile had probably reached the garden gate and escaped.

Nydia had indeed made straight for the open gate, but when she reached the garden she heard the voices of Arbaces and Calenus engaged in the conversation we have reported in the previous chapter. And the voices were approaching. She paused for a moment in doubt and terror, and then she remembered another passage which wound round the base of the mansion and communicated with the garden in another place. Quick as thought she ran to the door—it was closed and locked! Hearing the voices still behind her, she hurried on and found herself in unknown ground. The air was damp and chill; she might be in some underground chamber, and for a moment she thought she was safe. But still the murmur of voices followed her, and still moving forward she was at length stopped by a wall that seemed to prevent further escape. Feeling her way along the wall, she suddenly struck a projecting buttress, and fell to the ground. Although bruised she did not utter a sound, but crept behind the buttress, knowing that on one side at least she was screened from view.

Meanwhile Arbaces and Calenus were making their way to the secret chamber of which the Egyptian had spoken. The pale lamp which Arbaces carried gave but little light,

and Calenus shivered as he looked round the dim damp vault. 'The gay Glaucus will be lodged to-morrow in apartments not much drier and far less spacious than this,' he said, with a leer.

'Yes,' said Arbaces, 'and to think that a word from you could save him and condemn me!'

'That word shall never be spoken,' said Calenus.

'Right, my Calenus, it never shall,' returned Arbaces, 'but halt—we are now at the door.'

By the dim light the priest saw a small door set deep in the wall and secured by bolts and bands of iron. From his girdle Arbaces drew a small bunch of keys. How the heart of the avaricious Calenus beat as he thought of the treasures on the other side of the door!

'Enter, my friend,' said Arbaces, 'while I hold the lamp high that you may feast your eyes on the golden heaps.'

The priest did not wait for a second invitation, he hastened towards the door, but scarcely had he stepped over the threshold than Arbaces pushed him forward.

'*That word shall never be spoken!*' said the Egyptian, with a loud laugh, as he closed and locked the door on the imprisoned priest.

Calenus had been thrust down several steps, but, not feeling at the moment the pain of his fall, he sprang up again to the door, and beating at it fiercely with his clenched fist, he cried aloud in his rage and despair: 'Oh, release me, release me, and I will ask no gold!'

The words came but indistinctly through the massive door, and Arbaces only laughed. Then, as if to give vent to his own passion, he replied:

'All the gold in Italy will not buy you even a crust of bread. Starve, wretch! Your shouts and cries will never penetrate these walls, and the air cannot reveal the fate of him who would threaten Arbaces! Farewell!' And with these parting words, the Egyptian drew his robe closer round him, and returned to the upper air.

What words were these that Nydia had overheard! The next day Glaucus was to be condemned, yet there was one who could save him, and that one was within a few steps of her hiding-place. She listened intently for

a few minutes until she was convinced that Arbaces was well out of hearing, and then she crept to the door that had closed upon Calenus. Three times she spoke to him, but her voice could not penetrate that heavy door. At length, finding the lock, she applied her lips to the key-hole, and the priest distinctly heard a voice utter his name. His blood curdled, and his hair stood on end with fright. 'Who's there?' he cried, in new alarm.

'Calenus,' replied Nydia, 'unknown to Arbaces, I have been a witness of his treachery. If I can escape from here, I may deliver you. But tell me—did I hear you say that you can save Glaucus?'

'I can—I can—and that is why Arbaces has trapped me thus, and left me to starve. I saw the deed done—I saw Arbaces strike the blow; I can convict the true murderer and release the innocent man. But if I perish, he dies also.'

'Enough,' she said; 'the powers that brought me here will carry me through all. Yes, I feel that I shall deliver you. Wait in patience and hope.'

'Be very cautious, sweet stranger,' said Calenus; 'do not attempt to speak to Arbaces, he is like marble. Go to the magistrate, tell him what you know, and get a search warrant; then bring soldiers and smiths—for these locks are strong. Time flies—I may starve if you are not quick! Go! Yet stay—it is horrible to be alone!'

'Nay,' said Nydia, 'I cannot stay. You must take hope for your companion—farewell.' And she glided away, her arms outstretched, until she had gained the mouth of the passage that led to the garden. But here she paused, for she thought it safer to wait until the whole household was sound asleep before she ventured on her perilous journey to the magistrate—a journey which, as it happened, she was destined not to take.

For after leaving Calenus in his dungeon, Arbaces had gone straight to the apartment of Ione in order to ascertain whether she was any more reconciled to her lot than on the last occasion when he had seen her. He found her as bitter as ever in her hatred of him, and the only topic on which she would condescend to speak to him was the

fate of Glaucus. Seeing that her attitude of hostility towards him did not alter, Arbaces thought it wise to make security doubly sure, and on returning to his room he called his trusty slave Callias, and bade him go to Sosia and remind him that on no account was Nydia to be permitted to leave her room, and also to warn Ione's attendants that their mistress was not to be informed of the presence of Nydia in the house.

Having obeyed the second charge, Callias sought the worthy Sosia. He did not find him in his little cell, so he called his name aloud, and from Nydia's room close by he heard the voice of Sosia—'Oh, Callias, is that you? Pray open the door.'

Callias withdrew the bolt, and he saw the doleful face of Sosia, who forthwith imparted to him the account of Nydia's treachery and escape.

'You had better hang yourself, Sosia, I think,' said Callias, with a grim smile. 'I have just come from Arbaces with the message that on no account are you to allow her to leave her chamber, even for a moment.'

'Oh, misery!' groaned Sosia. 'What shall I do? By this time she may have visited half Pompeii. But to-morrow I will catch her. Do not betray me, my Callias.'

'I will do all I can for you. But are you sure she has left the house? She may be in hiding somewhere yet.'

'How is that possible? She could easily reach the garden, and the gate, I told you, was open.'

'That could not be,' said Callias, 'for at the very hour you mention Arbaces was in the garden with Calenus. I saw the table with the offerings as you describe, but the gate was shut. Calenus must have closed it as he entered, and I myself turned the key in the lock, and brought it away. See, here it is. I have it still in my girdle.'

'My good Callias, how can I thank you? Come, let us not lose a moment! Let us go to the garden at once—she may still be there.'

It was about this time that Nydia resolved to leave her hiding-place, and venture on her way, and hastening across the garden, she reached the gate—to find it locked. Her heart sank with disappointment to find her way thus

barred, and she was just wondering what to do, when the two slaves who were searching for her came up noiselessly from behind.

'Hush, Callias' whispered Sosia, 'let her go on; let us see what she will do next.'

'Look!' said Sosia, 'she raises her face to heaven—she mutters—she sits down despondent. No, she has some new idea. See! she springs up—she is coming back this way. We must seize her before she leaves the garden. Ah, runaway! I have you,' he said, grasping her arm as she passed.

A sharp shriek broke from the blind girl when she felt the grip of her jailer. It was a shriek of utter agony and despair. She felt that all her hopes and schemes had been dashed to the ground just as success seemed to be within her grasp. It had been a struggle between life and death—and now it seemed as though death had won.

'Her cry will alarm the house,' said Callias, 'and Arbaces is a very light sleeper. We must gag her.'

'Here is the very handkerchief with which she took away my senses,' said Sosia; 'now it shall take away her voice.' So saying he bound it tightly over her mouth. Then, raising her light weight in his arms, he carried her back to the chamber whence she had escaped. And there he left her once more in solitude and anguish.

CHAPTER 28

Relates certain events that happened on the night before the games.

THE hours passed in slow torture for Nydia from the time when she was replaced in her cell. Sosia, afraid of being again outwitted, did not visit her until late the following morning, and then he only thrust in the usual meal, and hastily closed the door. Yet knowing that the only chance for the life of Glaucus rested with her, Nydia was resolved not to give way to despair. She considered scheme after scheme for escape, but was obliged to dismiss them all. Sosia was her only hope. He had asked her to find out whether he could purchase his

freedom. Might he not be won by the chance of freedom itself? Was she not nearly rich enough to purchase it? Her arms were covered with bracelets, the presents of Ione; and on her neck she still wore the chain which Glaucus had given her. She waited impatiently till Sosia should again appear, but as hour after hour passed by she began to cry aloud and to beat herself against the door. Her cries echoed along the hall, and Sosia, in anger, hastened to see what was the matter and to silence her, if possible.

'Ho ho! what is this?' he said in a surly tone, 'Young slave, if you scream like this we shall be obliged to gag you again. My master will blame me if he hears it.'

'Kind Sosia, do not be vexed with me,' answered Nydia; 'I cannot bear to be so long alone. Sit and talk to me a little while. You need not fear that I will try to escape; you may sit with your back to the door.'

Sosia pitied one who had nobody to talk to—it was his case too; so he took Nydia's hint, placed a stool before the door, leaned his back against it, and replied:

'I am sure I do not wish to be uncivil, and I have no objection to a little chat. But mind, no tricks!'

'No, no; tell me, Sosia, how went the trial?'

'Both Glaucus and Olinthus have been condemned.'

Nydia stifled a cry. 'Well—well, I thought it would be so. When do they suffer?'

'To-morrow, in the amphitheatre. If it were not for you, I could go with the rest and see it.'

The poor girl leaned back for some moments. Nature could endure no more—she had fainted away.

She soon recovered, however, and asked abruptly: 'Sosia, how much do you require to purchase your freedom?'

'How much? Why, about two thousand pieces of silver.'

'Not more? Do you see these bracelets and this chain? They are worth double that sum. I will give them to you if—'

'Do not tempt me. I cannot release you. Arbaces is a very severe master.'

'Sosia, your freedom! Think well! Let me out for

one little hour ! Let me out at midnight—I will return before dawn ; nay, you can come with me.'

'No,' said Sosia, sternly, 'a slave once disobeyed Arbaces, and he was never heard of again.'

Nydia wrung her hands. 'Is there no hope then ?' she said sadly.

'None of escape till Arbaces gives the word.'

'Well, then, you will not refuse to take a letter for me ; your master cannot kill you for that.'

'To whom ?'

'To Sallust.'

'Oh and what do you want with him ?'

'Glaucus was my master ; he purchased me from a cruel lord. He alone has been kind to me, and I want to let him know in his hour of trial that I am grateful to him. Sallust is his friend ; he will convey my message.'

Sosia was greatly moved. The task was a light one, and the reward more than he could ever have hoped for—he assented to the proposal. 'Give me the jewel,' he said, 'and I will take the letter. But stay, you are a slave and have no right to these ornaments—they belong to your master.'

'Glaucus gave them to me and he is my master. What chance has he to claim them ?'

'Enough—I will bring the tablet of wax and a pen.'

When the tablet was brought, Nydia slowly traced some words in Greek, the language of her childhood, then wound round the letter the protecting thread, but before handing it to Sosia, she made him place his right hand in hers and swear that he would faithfully deliver the letter to Sallust.

With this Sosia left the chamber, drew the heavy bolt, turned the key in the lock, and fastened it to his belt. Then retiring to his own room he disguised himself in a heavy cloak and departed undisturbed and unseen.

He soon reached the house of Sallust. The porter bade him leave his letter and begone, for his master was so grieved at the fate of Glaucus that he could not be disturbed.

'But I have sworn to deliver this letter into his own

hands,' said Sosia, 'and so I must.' And he put a few coins into the hands of the porter.

'Well, well,' said the latter, 'if you must enter, you must; but to tell you the truth Sallust is drinking away his grief.'

So when Sosia was admitted he discovered Sallust in a state of semi-intoxication.

'Ho—who are you?' he said to Sosia.

'Only a messenger. I bring a letter from a young female. There is no answer that I know of. May I withdraw?'

'Yes, unfeeling wretch! Do you not see I am in sorrow! Go!'

Sosia lost not a moment in obeying.

'Will you read the letter?' said his companion to Sallust after Sosia had gone.

'Letter!—which letter? I have no heart for reading letters.' And he reeled off to bed.

CHAPTER 29

Describes the games in the amphitheatre.

GREYLY broke the dawn of THE LAST DAY OF POMPEII. The air was strangely calm and sultry, and a thin dull mist hung over city, field, and vineyard. Yet it was remarked in surprise by the early fishermen that in spite of the stillness of the atmosphere, the waves of the sea were agitated, and seemed to run disturbedly back from the shore. A cloud that had for long rested over the crest of Vesuvius had suddenly disappeared, and its proud and rugged brow looked without a frown over the beautiful scene below.

At a very early hour the gates of the city were opened. Horseman after horseman, vehicle after vehicle, poured rapidly in; the voices of numerous pedestrians, clad in holiday attire, rose high in joyous merriment; the streets were crowded with citizens and strangers, noisily making their way to the long-looked-for games in the arena.

It was the custom to attend the sports in festive robes,

and Arbaces arrayed himself that day with more than usual care. His tunic was of the most dazzling white, the buttons and clasps being of precious stones ; over his tunic he wore a flowing robe of the richest purple ; and his sandals were studded with gems and inlaid with gold.

Men of rank were generally accompanied to the amphitheatre by a procession of slaves and freedmen, and the retinue of Arbaces were already arranged for attendance on their lord. Only, to their great disgust, the slaves in attendance on Ione, and Sosia, as jailer to Nydia, were ordered to remain at home.

'Callias,' said Arbaces apart to his freedman, who was buckling his girdle, 'I am tired of Pompeii ; I propose to leave it in three days if the wind be favourable. I have purchased a vessel which is at present lying in the harbour. The day after to-morrow we shall begin to remove my stores.'

'So soon ! 'Tis well ! Arbaces shall be obeyed ; and Ione— ?'

'She accompanies me. Descend and see that all is in readiness.'

In due course the procession of Arbaces arrived at the amphitheatre. He at once proceeded to the entrance by which the more distinguished spectators were admitted, while his slaves mingled with the humbler crowd. Taking his seat, Arbaces looked round on the mighty and impatient throng that had already assembled.

On the upper tier sat the women in their gay and many-coloured dresses, while on the lower seats sat the high-born and wealthy citizens—the magistrates and the senators. The passages at the right and left which gave access to these seats were also the entrances for the combatants, and strong gates at these points prevented the beasts from escaping, and confined them to the floor of the arena.

The exhibition on this particular occasion was being provided at the expense of the magistrate Pansa, and he was therefore the most conspicuous person in the assembly as he hurried hither and thither to ascertain that all the arrangements were complete, and to give his final

orders regarding the conduct of the entertainment.

Suddenly the hubbub of voices ceased, as, with a loud and warlike flourish of trumpets, the gladiators entered in stately procession. They walked round very slowly and deliberately, for this introductory item of the programme was included simply in order to afford the spectators an opportunity of admiring their stern features and their muscular limbs, as well as the armour and weapons which each was to use in the contest.

'Oh' cried the widow Fulvia to the wife of Pansa as they leaned down from their lofty seat, 'do you see that gigantic gladiator? How strangely he is dressed!'

'Yes, replied her companion, 'his name is Niger, he is a netter; he is armed, you see, only with a three-pronged spear and a net. He is a mighty man, and is to fight with Sporus, yonder thick-set gladiator with the round shield and the sword.'

'But surely a net and a spear are poor arms against a shield and a sword?'

'That shows your innocence, my dear Fulvia; the netter generally has the best of it.'

'But who is the handsome gladiator yonder?'

'That is Lydon, a young untried man. He has the rashness to fight that other gladiator similarly dressed—Tetraides. They fight first in the Greek fashion with their fists—you can see the leather thongs bound round their hands and forearms, and the masses of metal on their knuckles. They will afterwards put on armour and try sword and shield.'

'How beautiful!' exclaimed the widow, as two fully armed gladiators rode round the arena on light and prancing steeds. 'Who are these?'

'One is named Berbix—he has won twelve contests; the other calls himself Nobilior. They are both Gauls.'

While they were thus conversing, the first formalities of the show were over. To these succeeded a feigned combat between the gladiators with wooden swords, but this sham contest did not rouse the interest of the spectators, and they were glad when it was over. The combatants were now arranged in pairs, as agreed

beforehand ; their weapons were examined ; and the real business of the day commenced amidst the deepest silence.

It was often customary to begin with the most cruel sports of all, but in the present instance Pansa thought the events should advance, and not decrease, in interest ; and accordingly the struggle of Olinthus and Glaucus with the beasts was reserved for the last. It was arranged that the two horsemen should first occupy the arena, then the foot gladiators in pairs, that Glaucus and the lion should next perform their part, the tiger and the Christian coming last of all. It was an awful spectacle, with which modern times have, happily, nothing to compare ; a vast amphitheatre, rising row upon row, and swarming with human beings, from fifteen to eighteen thousand in number, all intent upon the victory or defeat, the life or death, of every one who entered the arena.

The two horsemen now took their places, one at each end of the enclosure ; and, at a given signal, they started towards each other at full speed. For some time they fought skilfully, but whenever the spear of one was raised to deliver a blow, the shield of the other was ready to receive it. At last Nobilior turned his horse with great rapidity and directed his weapon full on the helmet of his foe. Berbix raised his shield, and his quick-eyed opponent, suddenly lowering his spear, pierced him through the breast. Berbix reeled and fell.

‘He has it,’ said Pansa, using the expression generally employed to denote the end of a contest, and at the same time looking round on the multitude for their verdict whether the final death-blow should be given to the fallen gladiator.

The people, not yet hardened into cruelty, gave the signal for mercy ; but when the attendants reached the body of Berbix, they found the kindness of the spectators had come too late—the heart of the Gaul was pierced and his eyes set in death.

There now entered the arena six combatants : Niger and his net matched against Sporus with his shield and short broadsword ; Lydon and Tetraides, scantily clad and each armed with a heavy boxing-glove ; and two gladiators

from Rome, in full steel armour, and carrying immense shields and pointed swords.

The contest between Lydon and Tetraides being less deadly than that between the others, it was agreed that they should fight first. No two antagonists could, at first glance, have been more unevenly matched. Tetraides, though not taller than Lydon, weighed considerably more, and was much more massively built. But Lydon, although slender, was beautifully proportioned, and the skilful perceived that what he lacked in weight he would be likely to make up in activity. His face wore a haughty smile which secured for him the hope and pity of the onlookers, so that the cry of the multitude was nearly as loud for Lydon as for Tetraides.

'Guard yourself!' growled Tetraides, as he came nearer and nearer to his foe.

Lydon did not answer, save by a scornful glance of his quick, vigilant eye. Tetraides struck—it was like the blow of a smith on an anvil; Lydon dropped on one knee, and the blow passed over his head. Not so harmless was Lydon's effort: he sprang quickly to his feet, and aimed his steel-clad fist on the broad breast of his antagonist. Tetraides staggered—the populace shouted. He soon recovered, however, and maddened by this first reverse, he struck out savagely, cutting open Lydon's shoulder.

Not in the least discouraged, Lydon kept his keen eye on his opponent, and seizing an opportunity when Tetraides relaxed his guard, he struck a blow which brought him to the ground. The larger man now began to strike out rashly, thinking to overpower his lighter foe by mere strength, but Lydon was too wary for him, and patiently waiting for his opportunity, he delivered a blow on the temple of Tetraides which would have crushed an ox. He fell and did not move.

'He has it,' shouted the people.

'He has it,' repeated Pansa; 'take them out and give them armour and swords.'

In a few minutes the attendants who dragged off the insensible gladiator returned to say that he would be unable to return to the arena.

'In that case,' said Pansa, 'keep Lydon as a substitute, and the first gladiator that is vanquished, let Lydon take his place and fight the victor.'

The people shouted their applause at this decision; then again they sank into deep silence. The trumpet sounded loudly, and the remaining four combatants took up their positions.

While the contests were thus proceeding there was one of the spectators for whom it had a terrible interest. The aged father of Lydon, in spite of his Christian horror of the games, had not been able, in his anxiety for the fate of his son, to stay away. Yet the old man saw and felt nothing but the form and presence of his brave son. Not a sound had escaped from his lips when he had seen him fall to the earth, but he had uttered one low cry when he saw him victorious.

'My gallant boy!' he said, wiping his eyes.

'Is he your son?' asked a neighbour to the right of the Christian; 'he has fought well; let us see how he does by and by. Listen, he is to fight the first victor. You may pray that the victor be neither of the two Romans yonder, nor the giant Niger.'

The old man sat down again and covered his face. The arena for the moment had no interest for him. Yet—yet—the thought flashed across him—the first who fell was to make way for Lydon. He started up and bent forward with straining eyes to watch the encounter.

The first interest was attracted towards the combat between Niger and Sporus. They stood apart and eyed each other for some moments, and then Sporus began slowly, and with great caution, to advance, holding his sword pointed towards the breast of his foe. Niger retreated as the other advanced, gathering up his net with his right hand, and never taking his small glittering eye off the face of the swordsman. Suddenly he threw himself forward and cast his net. A quick side movement saved the gladiator from the deadly snare, and with a cry of rage and joy he rushed at Niger. But Niger had already drawn in his net, and thrown it across his shoulders, and he now fled round the arena with a swiftness that his pursuer tried in vain to equal.

Niger suddenly paused, again cast his net, and again unsuccessfully, but this time he did not retreat with sufficient agility—the sword of Sporus inflicted a severe wound upon his right leg. He was now hard pressed by the fierce swordsman, but his great height and length of arm still continued to give him no small advantage, and keeping his trident in front of his foe, he held him back for several minutes. Sporus now tried to get round his antagonist, who necessarily moved slowly and painfully. In so doing he lost his caution—he advanced too near the giant—raised his arm to strike, and received the three points of the fatal spear full in the breast ! He sank on his knees. A moment more and the deadly net was cast over him. In vain he struggled against the meshes, and again and again he writhed beneath fresh strokes of the trident. His blood flowed fast over the sand, and he lowered his arms in token of defeat.

Niger withdrew his net, and leaning on his spear, looked to the audience for their judgment. The silence was dread, for in it there was no sympathy. Not a hand gave the signal of mercy, and in agonized submission Sporus bowed to his fate.

In the meantime the strife between the Roman gladiators had been decided. The sword of Eumolpus had inflicted a death wound upon his less experienced opponent, and another victim was added to the slain. Eumolpus removed his helmet and wiped his brow ; his curly hair and short beard, his noble Roman features and bright dark eye attracted general admiration. He was fresh, unwounded, unfatigued.

Pansa paused, and proclaimed aloud that, as Niger's wound prevented him from again entering the arena, Lydon would now oppose the victorious Roman.

'Yet, Lydon,' he added, 'if you wish to decline the combat you are at full liberty to do so. Eumolpus is not the antagonist originally intended for you, and you know how far you are able to cope with him. If you fail, your doom is honourable death ; if you conquer, I will out of my own purse double the prize.'

The people shouted applause. Lydon gazed around,

and saw the pale face and straining eyes of his father. He turned away undecided for a moment. No ! he had not yet won the prize of victory—his father was still a slave ! ' Noble Pansa,' he said in a firm tone. ' For the honour of Pompeii, where I have received my training, I will do battle with this Roman.'

The people shouted louder than before.

And now the two men, clad in complete armour, stood opposed to each other.

It was at this moment that a letter was handed to a magistrate sitting among the distinguished visitors. He glanced over it for a moment—his face showed surprise and perplexity. Then he re-read it, and muttering—' Impossible !—the man must be mad !'—he threw the letter aside and settled himself once more to watch the sports.

The interest of the public was now at a high pitch. Eumolpus had at first won their favour, but the brave words of Lydon and the reference to his Pompeian training had secured for him the sympathy of the whole assembly.

' Holloa, old fellow !' said Medon's neighbour to him. ' Your son is severely matched ; but never fear, Pansa will not allow him to be slain—neither will the people ; he is a brave lad. Ha ! that was a good stroke ! At him again, Lydon !'

There was a tremor of excitement throughout the multitude. A fierce blow from Eumolpus, full on his helmet, had brought Lydon to his knee.

' He has it !' shouted the shrill voice of a girl.

' Silence, child !' said the wife of Pansa. ' He is not wounded.'

Lydon had so far defended himself with great skill and courage, but he now began to give way before the assaults of the more expert Roman ; his shoulder, wounded in the previous encounter, grew tired, his eye dizzy, he breathed hard and painfully. The combatants paused for breath.

' Young man,' whispered Eumolpus, ' desist ; I will wound you slightly—then lower your arms. Pansa and the crowd will be satisfied, and you will be honourably saved.'



HE . . . THREW HIMSELF FIERCELY ON HIS FOE

'But my father will be still a slave,' groaned Lydon. 'No, it must be death or his freedom.'

At that thought, he resolved on a sudden and desperate effort, and threw himself fiercely on his foe—the Roman warily retreated—Lydon thrust again—Eumolpus stepped aside—the sword grazed his armour—Lydon's breast was exposed—the Roman plunged his sword between the joints of the armour, not meaning, however, to inflict a deep wound; Lydon, weak and exhausted, fell forward, right on the point of the weapon; it passed through and through, even to his back. Eumolpus drew forth his blade; Lydon made a vain effort to regain his balance—his sword left his grasp—he fell prostrate on the arena. As one man, the spectators made the signal for mercy. The officers of the arena approached and removed his helmet. He still breathed, but death had already settled on his face. Then with a start and a groan, he looked up. He looked not at Pansa, nor on the pitying faces of the crowd. One pale, sorrowful face was all he saw—the cry of a broken heart was all that he heard. Then a beautiful expression of soft and tender filial love settled on his face, and he fell back—dead.

'Look to him,' said Pansa, 'he has done his duty nobly.'

Rich perfumes were wafted round the amphitheatre, and fresh sand was sprinkled on the arena. Then the voice of Pansa was heard above the murmurs of the crowd—'Bring forth the lion and Glaucus the Athenian.'

CHAPTER 30

Shows how the games came to an unexpected end.

THRICE had Sallust awakened from his morning slumber, and thrice, recollecting that his friend was that day to perish, had he turned again to sleep. At length, weary in mind and unrefreshed in body, he raised himself, and found his favourite freedman sitting by his bedside as usual.

'Have the games begun in the amphitheatre?' he asked.

'Long since,' was the reply; 'did you not hear the trumpets?'

'Yes, but I was drowsy, and fell asleep again. None of my people have gone to the show?'

'Not one; your orders were too strict.'

'That is well—I wish the day were over! What is that letter on the table?'

'The one that was brought to you last night. Shall I open it for you?'

'Do: anything to divert my thoughts. Poor Glaucus!'

The freedman opened the letter. 'It is written in Greek,' he said, glancing over the irregular lines which the blind girl had traced.

Suddenly the expression of his face changed to one of intense surprise and emotion. 'Noble Sallust,' he exclaimed, 'what have we done not to attend to this before? Listen while I read!'

'"Nydia, the slave, to Sallust, the friend of Glaucus." I am a prisoner in the house of Arbaces. Hasten to the magistrate and procure my release, and we shall yet save Glaucus from the lion. There is another prisoner within these walls, whose evidence will acquit Glaucus, and bring the real criminal to justice. He saw the deed done. Hasten! Bring with you armed men lest resistance be made, and a clever smith, for the door of the cell of my fellow prisoner is thick and strong. Lose not a moment."

'Great heavens!' cried Sallust, starting up, 'and this day—perhaps this very hour Glaucus dies. What is to be done? I will go at once to the magistrate.'

'Not so. The magistrate is the friend of the mob; and the mob will not hear of delay. Besides, the Egyptian would be warned—he evidently has some reason for imprisoning these people. No; your slaves are fortunately in the house.'

'I see your meaning,' interrupted Sallust; 'arm the slaves at once. The streets are empty. We will hasten to the house of Arbaces and release the prisoners. Ho! my gown and sandals. I will write a note to the magistrate to delay the sentence on Glaucus. So, that is done. Hasten with this to the amphitheatre, and deliver it yourself. Now for the house of Arbaces.'

While Sallust and his slaves are on their way to release

Nydia and Calenus, we will return to the amphitheatre to watch the further proceedings.

Glaucus and Olinthus were in their gloomy cell awaiting their call into the arena. They were pale with anxiety, but they were not downcast. They bore themselves as heroes rather than victims.

'Hark! do you hear that shout?' said Olinthus; 'how can they rejoice over the sacrifice of human blood?'

'Yes, I hear it, and my heart grows sick; may the gods protect us.'

The door grated on its hinges—the gleam of spears shone along the wall outside.

'Glaucus, the Athenian, your time has come,' said a loud clear voice, 'the lion awaits you.'

'I am ready,' replied Glaucus. 'Brother, one last embrace! Bless me—and farewell!'

The Christian opened his arms—he clasped Glaucus to his breast—he kissed his forehead and his cheek—he sobbed aloud—his tears fell fast and hot over the face of his new friend.

Glaucus tore himself away, and as he emerged from his cell, the hot air made him feel faint and weak, so that the officers were obliged to support him.

'Courage!' said one, 'you are young and strong. They give you a weapon! Do not despair, you may yet conquer.'

Glaucus did not reply; but, ashamed of his infirmity, he made a desperate effort, and regained his nerve. They anointed his body, placed the stilus (poor weapon) in his hand, and led him into the arena.

The lion had been kept without food for twenty-four hours, and had been very uneasy the whole morning, which the keeper thought was due to the pangs of hunger. Yet its attitude seemed that of fear rather than rage; it hung its head—snuffed the air through the bars—then lay down—started again—and uttered a wild and far-reaching cry. Now in its den it lay dumb and quiet, its nostrils pressed hard against the grating, and its heavy breath disturbing the sand below.

Pansa's lip trembled and his face grew pale; he

hesitated and delayed until the crowd grew impatient. Slowly he gave the sign ; the keeper, who was behind the den, raised the grating, and the lion leaped forth with a mighty and glad roar of release. The keeper hastily retreated into the passage leading from the arena, and left the animal alone with its prey.

Glaucus had bent his limbs so as to give himself the firmest possible posture to meet the expected rush of the lion, and he held his light and shining weapon aloft, in the faint hope that with *one* well-directed blow (for he knew he would have time only for *one*) he might pierce the brain of his foe.

But to the profound astonishment of all, the beast did not seem to be aware of the presence of Glaucus. At the first moment of its release it stopped abruptly, raised itself on its hind legs, sniffed the air, and then sprang forward, but not on the Athenian. It circled round and round the arena, turning its head from side to side, as if seeking an opening by which to escape ; once or twice it attempted to lead up the parapet which divided it from the spectators ; it gave no sign of rage or hunger, and although it looked once or twice at Glaucus, its eye turned from him again listlessly. At last, it crept with a moan into the cage, and again lay down to rest.

The assembly, at first surprised, now became annoyed at the cowardice of the animal, and Pansa called aloud to the keeper to take a goad and prick the lion out of the den and to close the door.

As the keeper was preparing to obey, a loud voice was heard at one of the entrances to the arena, and Sallust, breathless, heated, and half-exhausted, appeared before the magistrate, and cried : ' Remove the Athenian ; hasten—he is innocent ! Arrest Arbaces the Egyptian—*He* is the murderer of Apæcides ! '

' Are you mad, Sallust ? ' said the magistrate, rising from his seat. ' What means this raving ? '

' Remove the Athenian !—Quick ! or his blood be upon your head. I bring with me an eye-witness of the death of the priest Apæcides. Room there !—give way !—Room for the priest Calenus ! '

Pale, haggard, and snatched from the jaws of famine and death—Calenus was supported into the very row in which Arbaces sat.

‘Calenus,’ said the Magistrate, ‘what have you to say?’

‘Arbaces of Egypt is the murderer of Apæcides; these eyes saw him strike the blow. It is from the dungeon into which he hurled me that I have now been released to proclaim his crime. Glaucus is innocent.’

‘This, then, is why the lion spared him. A miracle—a miracle’ cried Pansa.

‘A miracle—a miracle!’ shouted the people; ‘remove the Athenian—*Arbaces to the lion!*’

And the shouts echoed from the hills to the sea: *Arbaces to the lion!*

‘Officers, remove Glaucus the accused—but guard him yet,’ commanded the magistrate. ‘This day is a day of wonders!’

As the word of release went forth, a cry of joy rang through the arena—it was the voice of a girl. And the whole assembly echoed it back in sympathy and congratulation.

‘Silence!’ said the magistrate. ‘Who raised that cry?’

‘It was Nydia, the blind girl,’ answered Sallust; ‘it is she who has delivered Calenus from his dungeon, and Glaucus from the lion.’

‘Of this hereafter;—Calenus, priest of Isis, you accuse Arbaces of the murder of Apæcides?’

‘I do.’

‘You saw the deed?’

‘With these eyes—’

‘Enough at present—the details must be reserved for a more suitable time and place. Arbaces of Egypt, you hear the charge made against you—what have you to say?’

Proudly and calmly he replied: ‘Noble sir, the charge is so absurd that it scarcely deserves an answer. My first accuser is Sallust, an intimate friend of Glaucus; my second is a priest; I respect his vocation, but the people of Pompeii know the character of Calenus—he is greedy and gold-thirsty, and the evidence of such men may be bought. I am innocent!’

'Sallust,' said the magistrate, 'where was Calenus when you found him?'

'In a dungeon in the house of Arbaces.'

'Egyptian,' continued the magistrate, 'you dared then to imprison a priest of Isis—wherefore?'

'Hear me,' said Arbaces with agitation, 'this man came to threaten me with this charge, unless I agreed to purchase his silence with half my fortune. I remonstrated with him, but in vain, and in a moment of foolish fear I allured him to the cell whence he has just been released under the pretence that my wealth was stored there. I intended to keep him there until the fate of the real criminal had been sealed, but I meant nothing more. Were I guilty, why did not this man give evidence against me at the trial? This needs an answer. For the rest, I willingly throw myself upon your laws, and will cheerfully accept the decision of a regular court.'

'He has spoken well,' said the magistrate. 'Guards! remove Arbaces—keep watch over Calenus. Sallust, we hold you responsible for your accusation. Let the sports be resumed.'

'What!' cried Calenus, turning round to the people, 'shall justice be delayed? Shall the blood of Apæcides yet call for vengeance? *To the lion—to the lion with Arbaces.*'

With that cry the people sprang from their seats—thousands upon thousands. They poured down from the upper tiers in the direction of the Egyptian. In their thirst for blood, the spectators forgot the authority of their rulers, and thrust aside the guards who had ranged themselves along the lower benches, on which the wealthier citizens were seated. In despair and terror, Arbaces cast his eyes over the rushing crowd, when right above them through a space left vacant by the moving multitude he saw an awful sight—and the sight restored his courage.

'Behold!' he shouted with a voice of thunder, which stilled the roar of the people; 'behold how the gods protect the innocent!'

The eyes of the crowd followed the uplifted hand of the Egyptian, and they saw with horror and dismay a vast column of smoke shooting from the summit of Vesuvius.

A dread silence followed, and then there broke upon the air the roar of the lion, and the shrieks of the women—the men were dumb. At that moment they felt the earth shake beneath their feet; the walls of the theatre trembled; and in the distance they heard the crash of falling roofs; an instant later and the mountain-cloud seemed to roll towards them, dark and rapid, like a torrent; at the same time it cast forth from its crest a shower of ashes with vast fragments of burning stone. Over the fields and vineyards—over the desolate streets—over the arena itself—far and wide—with many a mighty splash fell that awful shower.

The crowd thought no longer of the games or of Arbaces; safety was the only concern of the great throng, which pressed into the numerous passages, trampling recklessly over the fallen, and heedless of the groans and prayers and shrieks of the weak. Whither should they fly? Some, anticipating a second earthquake, hastened to their homes to load themselves with what they could collect; others, dreading the showers of ashes, which now fell faster than ever, rushed for protection under the roofs of houses or temples or sheds—shelter of any kind. But darker, and larger, and mightier spread the cloud above them. It was as if Night had suddenly taken the place of Noon.

CHAPTER 31

Brings the story to a close.

GLAUCUS had been led by the officers of the arena into a small cell, and as he sat there marvelling at his deliverance, Nydia entered and flung herself at his feet.

'It is I who have saved you,' she sobbed; 'now let me die!'

Scarcely had she uttered the words when the cry came from the amphitheatre, 'The mountain, the earthquake!' The officers fled with the rest, and left Glaucus and Nydia to save themselves as best they might.

The sense of the dangers around them flashed upon the Athenian, and his generous heart thought of Olinthus. Taking Nydia by the hand he hurried along the passage

and reached the cell of the Christian. He found Olinthus kneeling in prayer.

'Arise, friend,' he cried. 'See! Nature itself is your deliverer.' He led forth the bewildered Christian, and pointing to the cloud which advanced darker and darker he bade him follow the fleeing crowd.

'This is the hand of God,' said Olinthus, devoutly: 'God be praised,' and he hurried along, he knew not whither. The open door of a dark cell suddenly appeared in his path, and through the gloom there flickered a single lamp. There by its light he saw three grim forms stretched in death, and heard a low voice calling on the name of Christ. Peering in he beheld an old grey-headed man sitting on the floor, and supporting in his lap the head of one of the dead. The tears of the old man were falling fast and hot. His boy was dead, and had died for him,—and the old man's heart was broken.

'Medon,' said Olinthus, in a voice full of tender pity, 'arise, and fly! Fly before you are consumed! Hark to the cries of the dying! Not a moment is to be lost!—Come.'

But the old man smiled calmly. 'No, no, no,' he muttered. 'Death cannot separate us. Death is kind.' With that his head drooped on his son's breast—his arms relaxed their grasp. Olinthus caught him by the hand—the pulse had ceased to beat. His last words were words of truth—*Death had been kind*.

Meanwhile Glaucus and Nydia were making their way swiftly along the fearful and perilous streets. The Athenian had heard from his deliverer that Ione was still in the house of Arbaces, and thither he hastened to save her. With rapid strides he crossed the garden and ascended the stairs to the upper part of the forsaken mansion. Breathless he paced along, shouting the name of Ione, and at length he heard a voice—her voice in wondering reply. To rush forward—to shatter the door—to seize Ione in his arms—to hurry from the house—all this seemed to him the work of an instant. Scarcely was he outside, than he heard steps advancing, and recognized the voice of Arbaces, who had returned to secure his wealth and Ione before escaping from the doomed city. So dense was the

atmosphere that the foes were unable to see each other, and Glaucus and Ione, with Nydia, hastened away.

Moment by moment the gloom increased, but in proportion as the blackness gathered, the lightnings above Vesuvius became more vivid and terrifying. The ashes were already knee-deep, and travelling, whether on foot or in a chariot, was extremely difficult, while immense fragments of rock which were being hurled up from the mountain added to the danger.

Through this awful scene the three struggled along. Suddenly a rush of hundreds of people swept by them. Nydia was torn from the side of Glaucus, who, with Ione, was borne rapidly onward, and when the crowd (whose forms they could not see) had passed by, Nydia was not with them. Glaucus called her name aloud, but no answer came. They retraced their steps—in vain; she had been carried along by the human current. Their friend and preserver was lost. She was also their guide, for she alone of the three could find her way along the city streets in the intense darkness. Whither should they go? There was nothing to guide them, and the lonely girl began to abandon hope.

‘Alas!’ murmured Ione, ‘I can go no farther; my feet sink in these scorching ashes. Fly, my Glaucus, and leave me to my fate.’

As she spoke a vivid flash of lightning revealed their whereabouts.

‘Blessed lightning,’ exclaimed Glaucus. ‘See, Ione, the Temple of Fortune is before us. Let us creep under its porch; it will protect us from the showers.’

He caught Ione in his arms and with difficulty reached the temple. He bore her to the more sheltered part of the porch, and stood before her to shield her from the showers. As they stood there, a group of people approached bearing torches, and Glaucus and Ione ventured again into the street to take advantage of the light.

Redly and steadily the torches flashed upon the lovers. Several slaves were bearing heavy burdens; in front of them—a drawn sword in his hand—towered the lofty form of Arbaces!

'Fate smiles upon me, even in the midst of all these horrors,' cried the Egyptian. 'Away, Greek! I claim my ward, Ione.'

'Traitor and murderer!' exclaimed Glaucus, 'touch but the hand of Ione and your weapon shall be as a reed—I will tear you limb from limb!'

Suddenly, as he spoke, the place was lighted with an intense and livid glow. Bright through the darkness shone the mountain—a pile of fire.

The slaves shrieked aloud and hid their faces. The Egyptian himself stood transfixed to the spot, the glow lighting up his commanding features and jewelled robes. High behind him rose a tall column that supported the bronze statue of the Emperor Augustus; and the imperial image shone in the awful light.

His left arm supporting Ione, and his right hand grasping the stilus which was to have been his weapon in the arena, Glaucus, with his brow knit, and his lips apart, fronted the Egyptian.

Arbaces turned his eyes from the mountain, and glared at Glaucus. He paused a moment. 'Why should I hesitate?' he muttered. 'Did not the stars foretell for me only one peril, and is not that peril past?' And then aloud, 'Advance, slaves!—Athenian, resist me and your blood will be upon your own head! Thus I regain Ione!'

He advanced one step—it was his last on earth! The ground shook beneath him and a crash resounded through the city, as down toppled many a roof and pillar—the lightning lingered an instant on the Imperial Statue—then down came image and column, echoing along the street, and breaking the solid pavement where they fell. The prophecy of the stars was fulfilled!

The sound—the shock—stunned the Athenian for several moments. When he recovered, the light still illuminated the scene—the earth still trembled beneath. Ione lay senseless on the ground; but he saw her not yet—his eyes were fixed upon a ghastly face that seemed to emerge, without limbs and trunk, from the huge fragments of the shattered column—a face of unutterable agony and despair. The eyes shut and opened rapidly, as if the sense

were not yet fled ; the lips quivered—then sudden stillness and darkness fell over the features, which still retained an aspect of horror never to be forgotten.

So perished the wise Magician—the great Arbaces—the last of the royalty of Egypt !

Glaucus turned in gratitude, but in awe. Seizing Ione once more in his arms, he fled along the street, which was still intensely luminous. Suddenly a duller shade came over the scene. Instinctively he returned to look at the mountain, and behold ! the crest seemed to rock and wave to and fro, and then with a mighty roar to rush like an avalanche of fire, towards the city. Darkness once more wrapped them as in a veil ; and Glaucus, his brave heart despairing, sank beneath the cover of an arch, and resigned himself to die.

Meanwhile Nydia, when separated by the throng from Glaucus and Ione, had endeavoured vainly to rejoin them. She returned to the spot where they had been parted—only to find her companions gone. At length it occurred to her that, as it had been resolved to reach the seashore, her best chance of rejoining Glaucus and Ione would be to persevere in that direction. Guiding her steps, then, by her staff she continued to pursue her way to the seaside.

Crowds of fugitives passed by, none heeding the lonely blind girl, and presently the slaves of Arbaces with their burdens of treasure overtook her. Only one of all their torches still flickered on. It was borne by Sosia, and by its light he recognized the face of his late prisoner.

‘What avails your liberty now, blind girl?’ said the slave.

‘Who are you ? Can you tell me of Glaucus ?’ she asked.

‘Aye, I saw him only a few minutes ago.’

‘Where?’

‘Under an arch in the market—dead or dying !—gone to join Arbaces who is also dead !’

Nydia uttered not a word ; silently she retraced her steps to the city. She reached the market—the arch ; she stooped down—she felt around—she called the name of Glaucus.

A weak voice answered—‘Who calls me ? Is is the voice of Death ? Lo ! I am prepared !’

'Arise! follow me! Take my hand! Glaucus, you shall be saved.'

In wonder and sudden hope, he arose—'Nydia still?' he said. 'Ah, then, you are safe.'

Half-leading, half-carrying Ione, Glaucus followed his guide. With marvellous instinct she led them to the sea, where they joined a group, who, bolder than the rest, resolved to brave any danger rather than remain in such a scene.

In darkness they put out to sea. Utterly worn out and exhausted, Glaucus and Ione slept, but Nydia lay wakeful and deep in thought.

In the silence of the general sleep, Nydia rose gently. She bent over the face of Glaucus and timidly and sadly she kissed his brow. 'May the gods bless you, my friend!' she murmured; 'may you be happy with your beloved one—may you sometimes remember Nydia. Alas! she is of no further use on earth!'

With these words she crept away to the farther side of the vessel, and bent low over the water—the cool spray dashed up on her feverish brow. 'It is the kiss of death,' she said; 'it is welcome.' She raised her eyes—her sightless eyes—to the sky she had never seen. 'I cannot endure life without him,' she mused; 'I have saved him—twice saved him—happy, happy thought;—why not *die* happy? it is the last glad thought I can ever know. Oh! Sacred Seal I hear your voice inviting me, and it has a joyous call. Rest—rest—rest—Death is the only rest for a heart like mine.'

A sailor, half asleep on the deck, heard a slight splash on the waves. He looked up drowsily, and as the vessel bounded merrily on, he fancied he saw something white on the water, but it vanished in an instant. He turned round again and dreamed of his home and his children.

When the lovers awoke, their first thought was of each other—their next of Nydia. She was nowhere to be found—none had seen her during the night. The vessel was searched, but there was no trace of her—she had vanished for ever from the living world. They guessed her fate in silence; and Glaucus and Ione wept for her as for a departed sister.

